As the abuse of and addiction to prescription opioids has increasingly become a public health crisis, scientists are looking for new ways to treat chronic pain. In a very preliminary study in rats, scientists at the University of Texas at Arlington have shown that deep brain stimulation of the ventral tegmental area can significantly reduce pain. Work published in Experimental Brain Research shows that stimulation of this brain region blocks pain signals at the spinal cord level without drug intervention. The process also triggers the release of beneficial dopamine, which may reduce the emotional distress associated with long-term pain.

Read more: http://bit.ly/1MOmvDl

Journal article: Stimulation of the ventral tegmental area increased nociceptive thresholds and decreased spinal dorsal horn neuronal activity in rat. Experimental Brain Research, 2016. doi: 10.1007/s00221-016-4558-z

Image credit: Sarah Grice, Wellcome Images