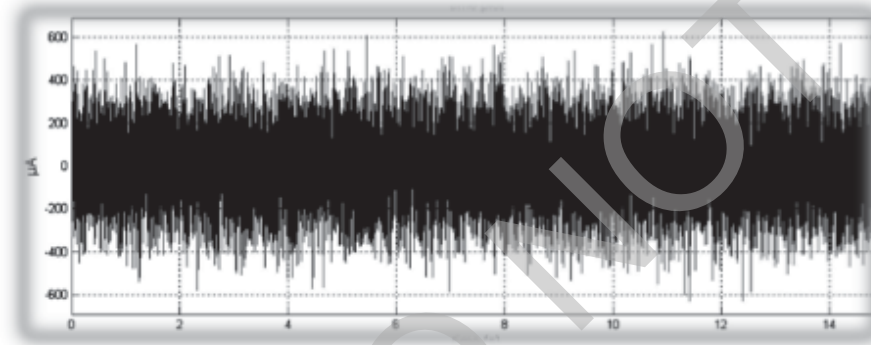


# Transcranial Random Noise Stimulation- tRNS

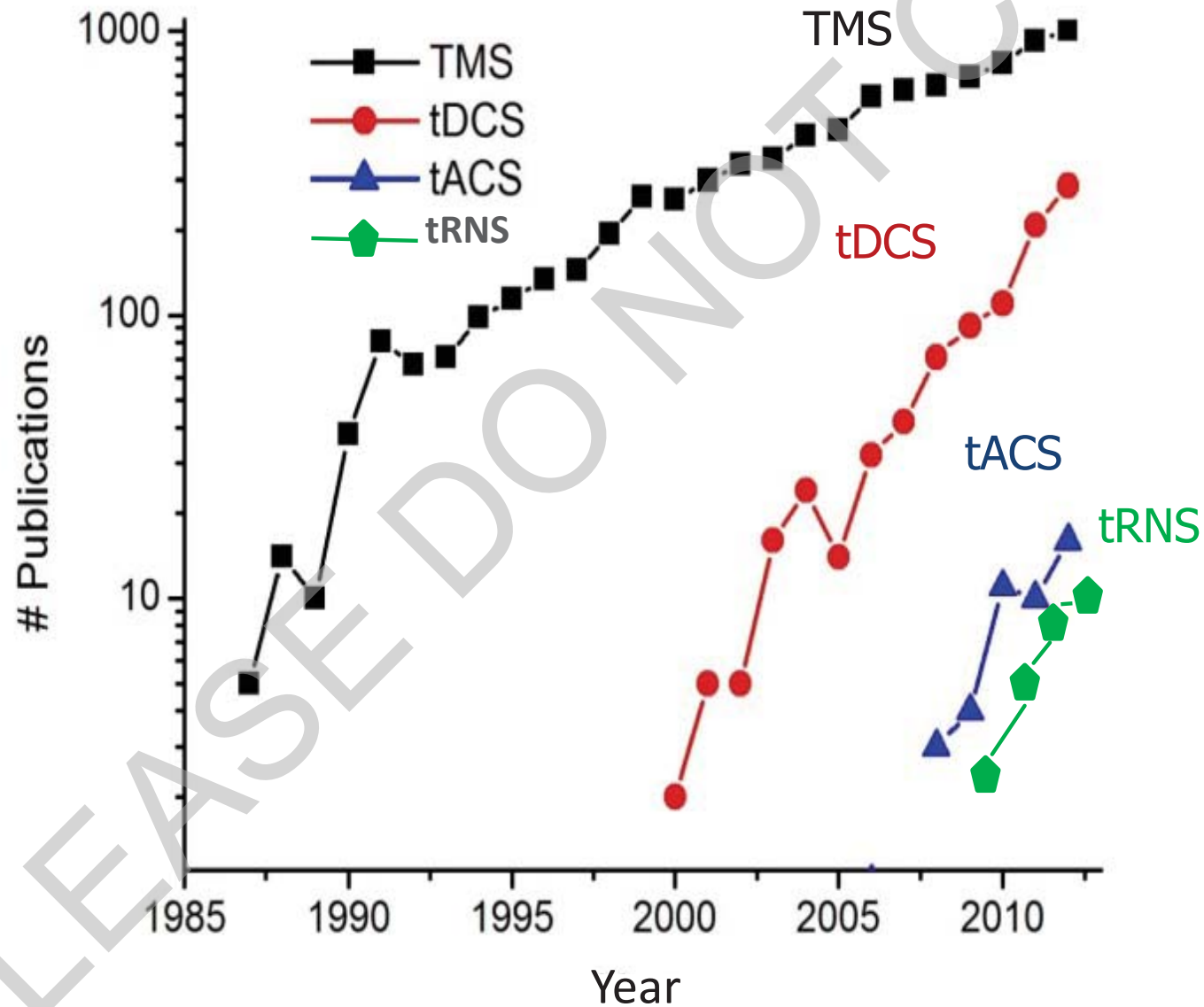


**Emiliano Santarnecchi**

- Berenson-Allen Center for Non-invasive Brain Stimulation, Department of Cognitive Neurology | Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center | Harvard Medical School | Boston, MA, USA

[esantarn@bidmc.harvard.edu](mailto:esantarn@bidmc.harvard.edu)

# Transcranial Random Noise Stimulation (tRNS)



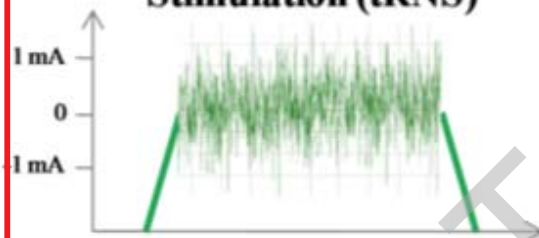
# tCS family

A

## Transcranial **Direct Current** Stimulation (tDCS)



## Transcranial **Random Noise** Stimulation (tRNS)



## Transcranial **Alternating Current** Stimulation (tACS)



<b>Current</b>	Constant/Direct	Oscillatory/Alternating	Oscillatory/Alternating
<b>Stimulation parameters</b>	Anode: excitatory Cathode: inhibitory	1-640 Hz (random) 100-640 Hz: excitatory	Frequency (Hz) Phase (Degrees)
<b>Mechanism</b>	Membrane polarization	Stochastic resonance	Entrainment
<b>Effect on Neuronal effect</b>	Cortical excitability During and After	Cortical excitability During and after	- Brain oscillations (power, phase) - Cortical excitability (>100Hz) During and After

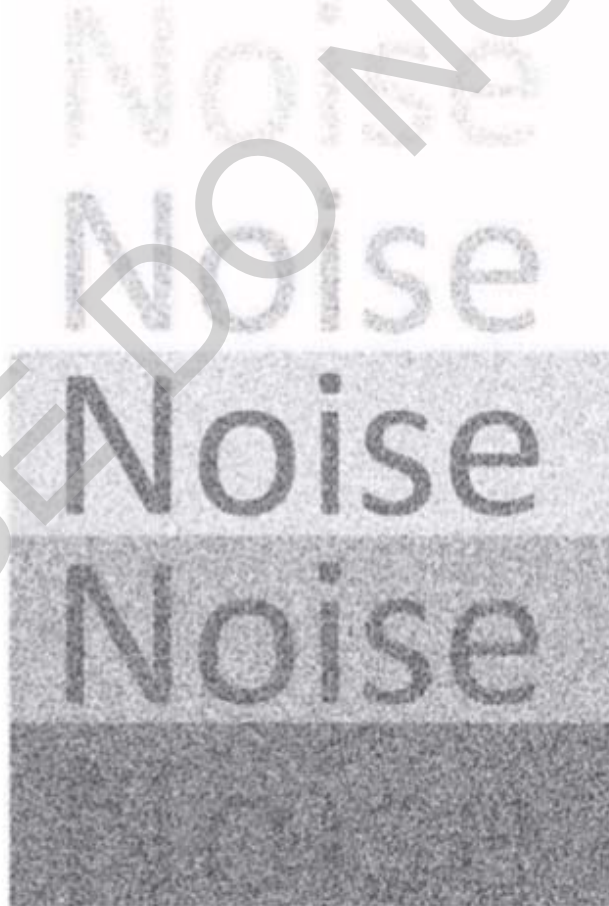


# Noise in a complex system

If everything else is ideal, then noise is the enemy.

However, in the presence of a *weak* signal noise is beneficial for signal detection

---



## Beneficial Effect of Noise

Benefits have been reported in diverse systems, including:

- Climate models
- Electronic circuits
- Differential equations
- Lasers
- Neural models
- Physiological neural populations and networks
- Chemical reactions
- Ion channels
- SQUIDs (superconducting quantum interference devices)
- Ecological models
- Cell biology
- Financial models
- Psychophysics
- Nanomechanical oscillators
- Organic semiconductor chemistry
- Social systems

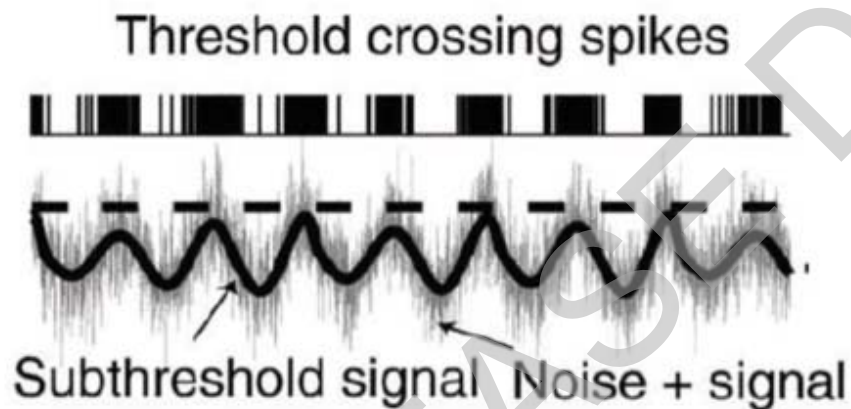
McDonnell & Abbott, 2009, PLoS Comp Biol



# Noise in Nonlinear Systems: Stochastic Resonance

**Nonlinearity:** presence of noise in a nonlinear system is better for output signal quality than its absence. Noise cannot be beneficial in a linear system

Performance (noise + nonlinearity) > Performance (nonlinearity)

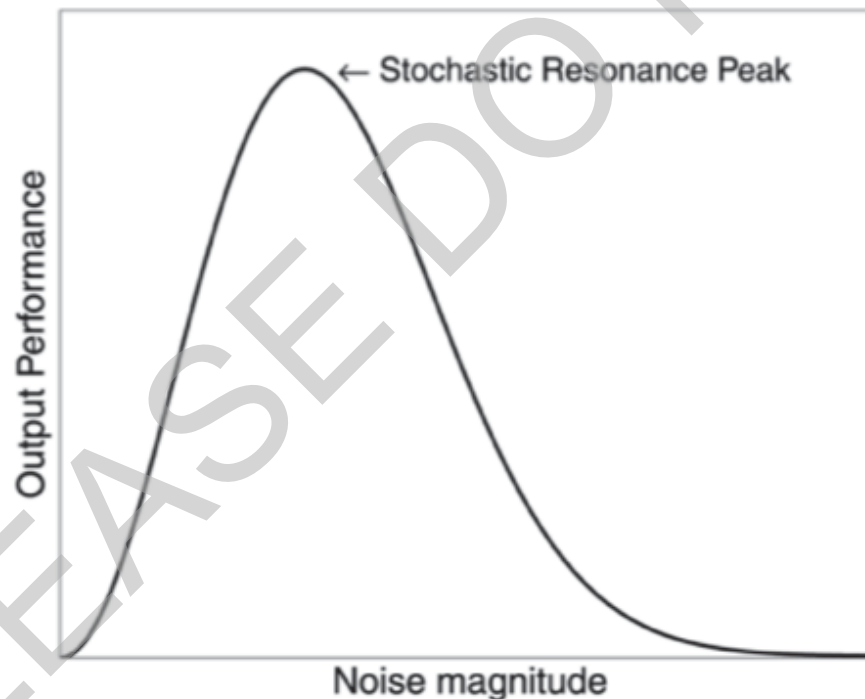


**Stochastic facilitation:** Random noise enhances the detection of weak stimuli and/or the information content of a signal  
(Moss et al., 2004, Clin Neurophysiol; McDonnell & Ward, 2011, Nat Rev Neurosci)

# Noise in Nonlinear Systems: Stochastic Resonance

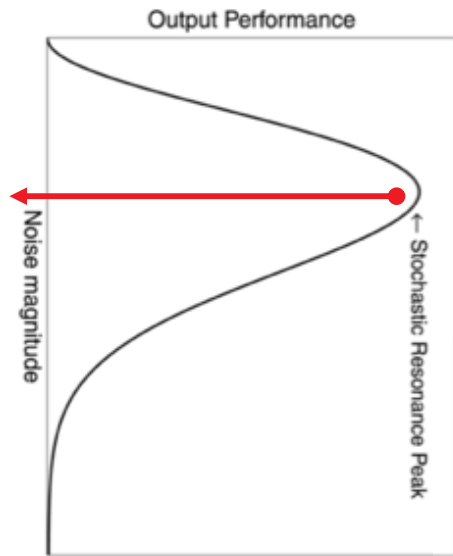
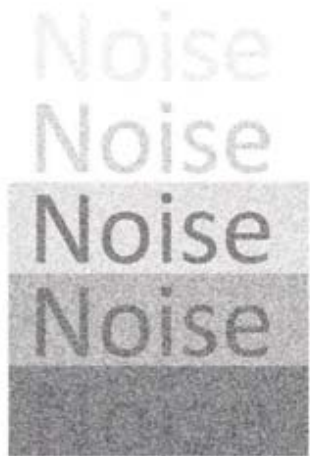
**Nonlinearity:** presence of noise in a nonlinear system is better for output signal quality than its absence. Noise cannot be beneficial in a linear system

Performance (noise + nonlinearity) > Performance (nonlinearity)



McDonnell & Abbott, 2009,  
PLoS Comp Biol

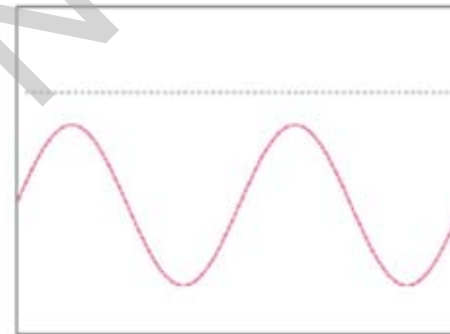
# Optimal Amount of Noise



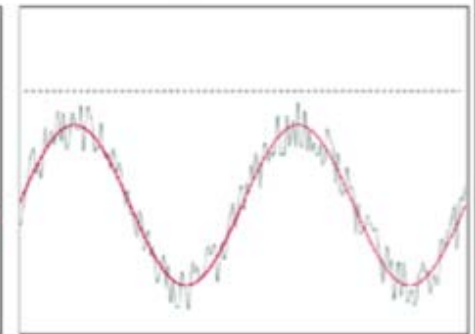
System threshold

Input

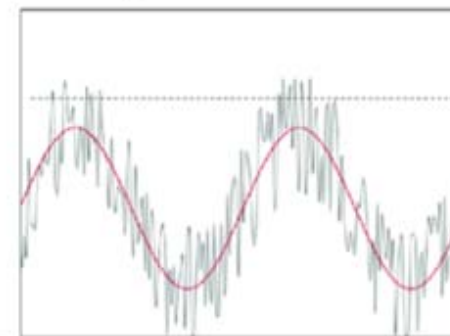
no noise



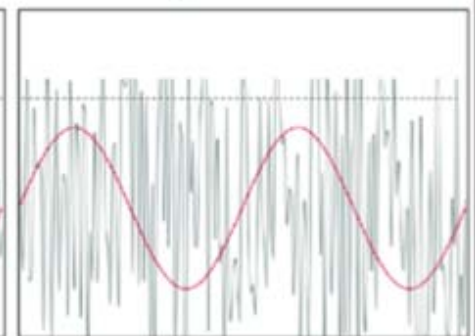
weak noise



optimal noise



high noise



System threshold

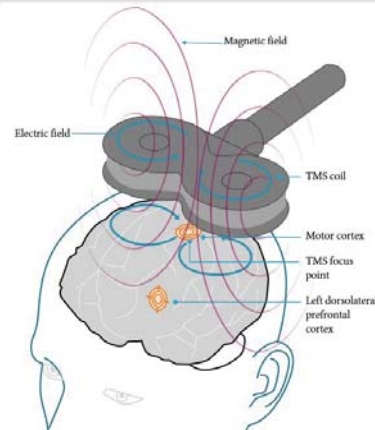
Input



## Impact of Noise in the Human Brain..?

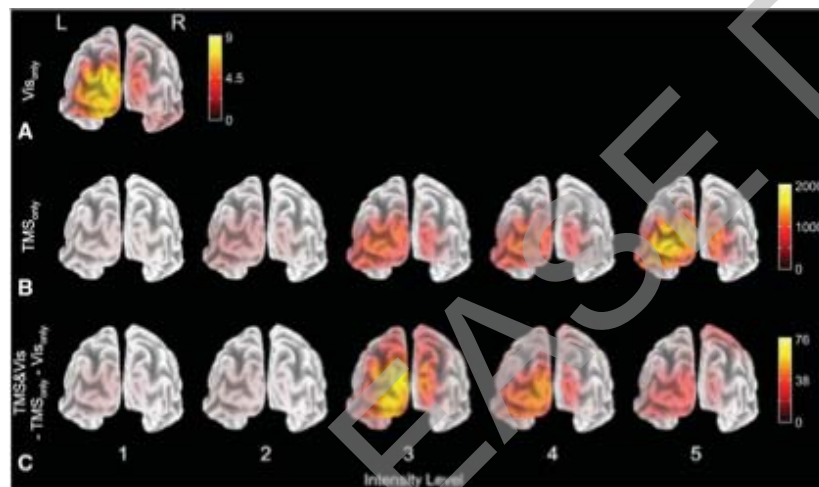


# Stochastic resonance theory and TMS



**TMS:** Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation

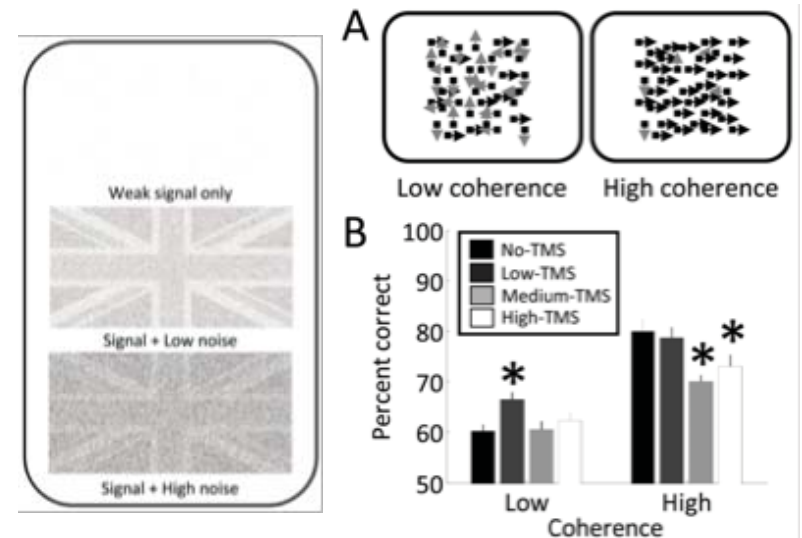
**Lower intensity of TMS enhances processing of visual stimuli; higher intensity impairs it**



Effects of transcranial magnetic stimulation on visual evoked potentials in a visual suppression task

A. Reichenbach <sup>a,1</sup>, K. Whittingstall <sup>b,1</sup>, A. Thielscher <sup>a,\*</sup>

**Lower intensity of TMS facilitates visual motion detection; higher intensity of TMS disrupts it**



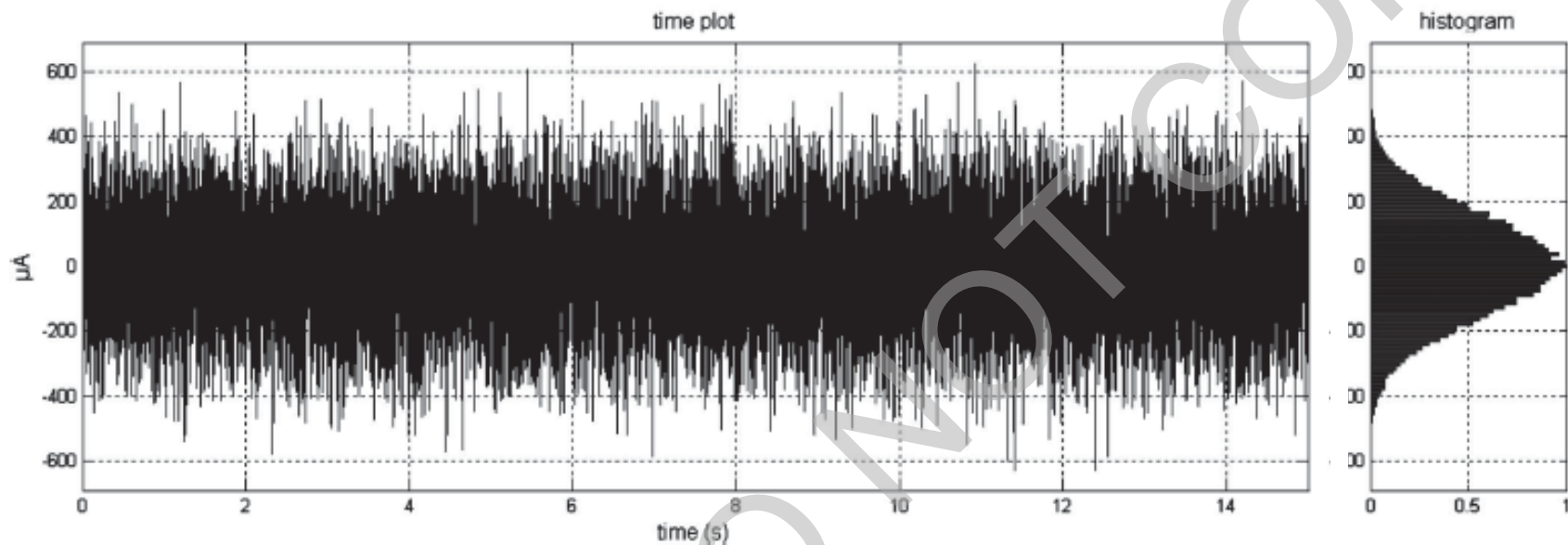
**Stochastic resonance effects reveal the neural mechanisms of transcranial magnetic stimulation**

Dietrich Samuel Schwarzkopf<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, Juha Silvanto<sup>3</sup>, and Geraint Rees<sup>1,2</sup>

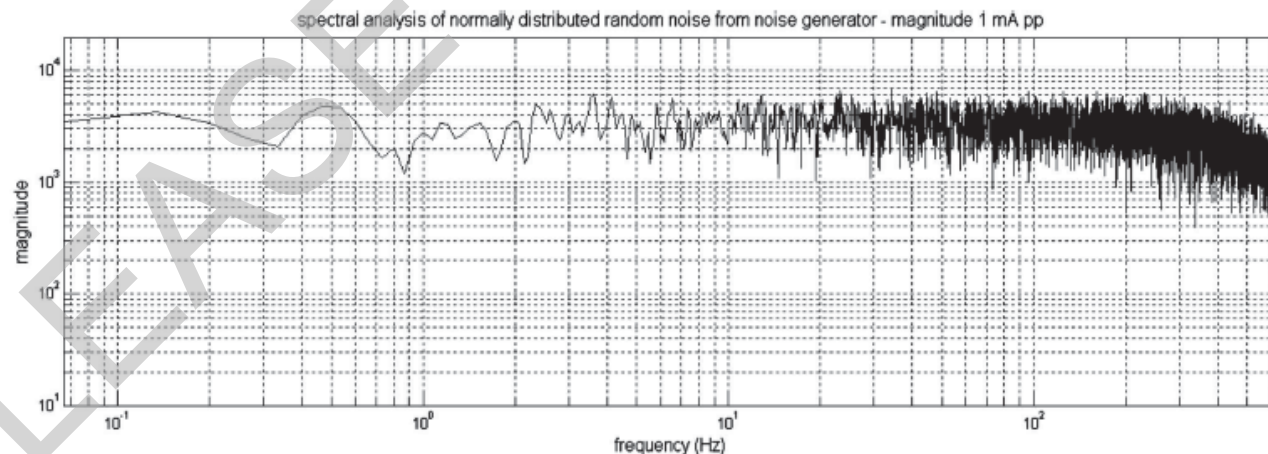
**tRNS: First evidence in humans**

# tRNS - Method

Terney et al., 2008



Random level of current generated for every sample (frequency 1-640Hz). The signal is normally distributed, with the current intensity constantly fluctuating around 0  $\mu A$ . For a 1mA amplitude, 99% of the Current is between -500/500  $\mu A$  (Peak to Peak amplitude)



Stimulation frequency constantly change within a predefined spectrum

# tRNS – Neurophysiological evidence

Terney et al., 2008

## Experiment 1

10'

tRNS (1-640Hz)

## Experiment 2

10'

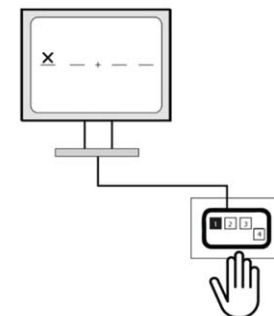
tRNS (1-100Hz) vs (101-640Hz)

**Stimulation site:** Primary Motor Cortex, Premotor cortex

**Electrophysiological evaluation:** Motor Evoked Potential (MEP), Rectruitment Curve, Short-Interval Intracortical Inhibition (SICI), Intracortical Facilitation (ICF), Long-Interval Intracortical Facilitation (LICI), Cortical Silent Period (CSP).



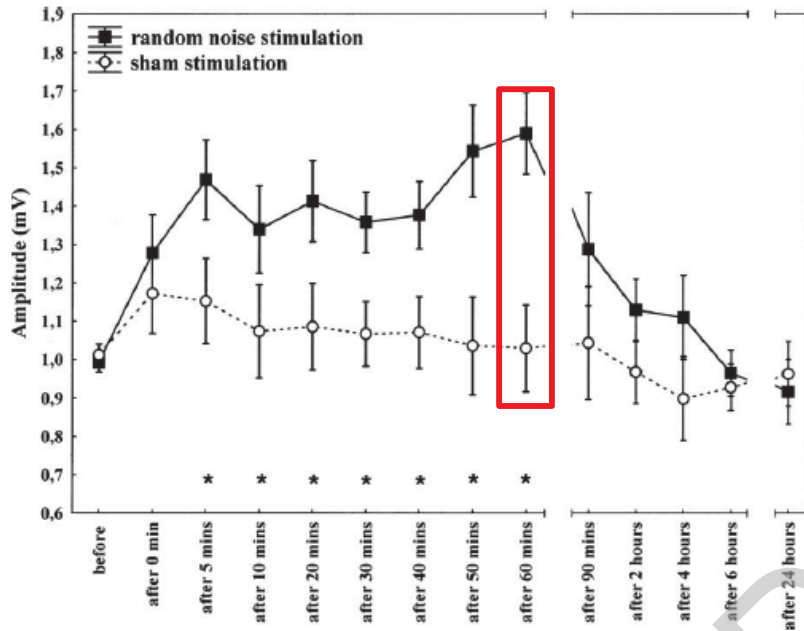
**Behavioural evaluation:** Serial Reaction Time Task (SRTT)



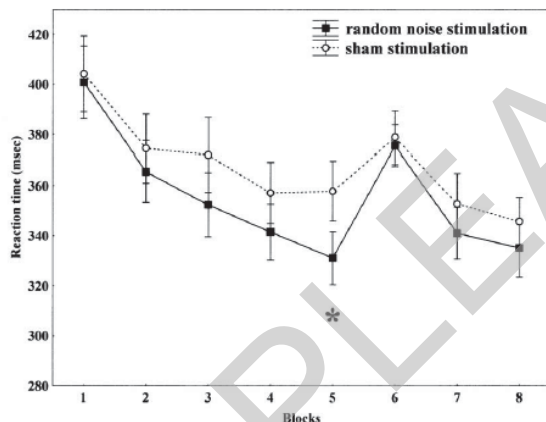


# tRNS - Results

## Experiment 1 tRNS (1-640Hz)



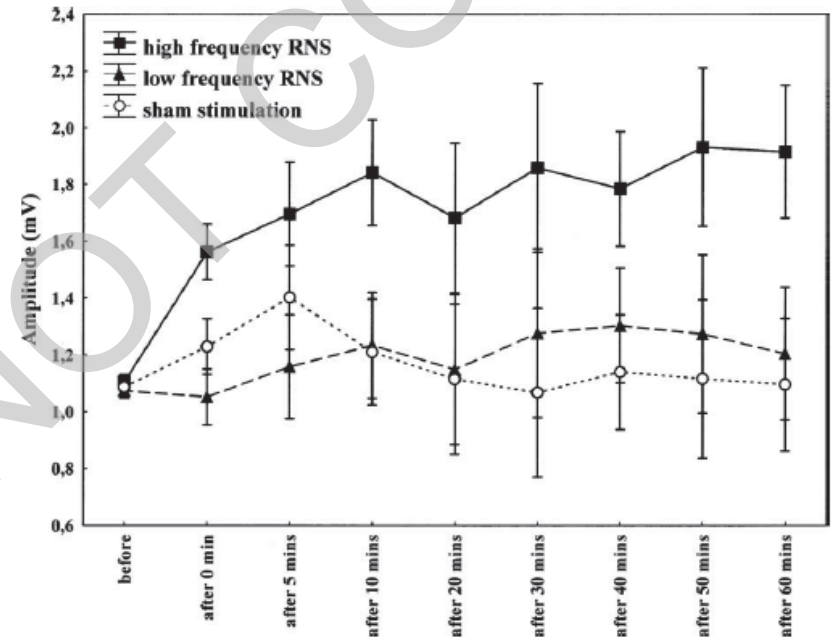
**Increase in cortical excitability** lasting for 60' after stimulation.



**Behavioral effect**

tRNS improves **implicit motor learning** in its early phase (<RT).

## Experiment 2 tRNS (1-100Hz) vs (101-640Hz)



Effect is selective for **High-Frequency tRNS** (101-640Hz)

**Significant effect on ICF (12, 15ms)**

No changes in Recruitment Curve, SICI, LICI, CSP.

No effect for premotor cortex stimulation.

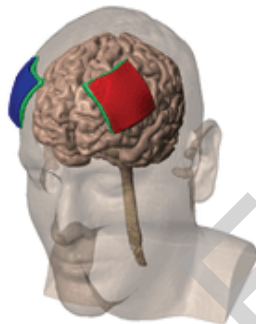
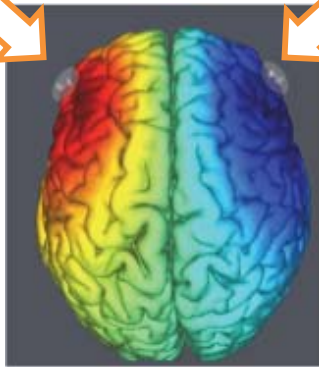
## tRNS vs other tCS techniques

# tRNS vs tDCS vs tACS: Induced Electrical field and Polarity

## tDCS

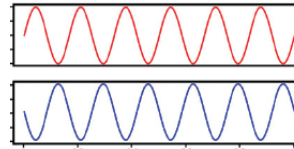
Anodal stimulation

Cathodal stimulation



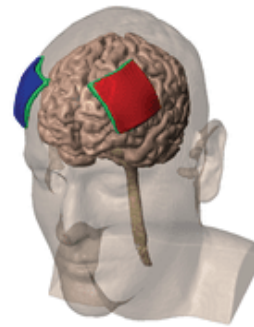
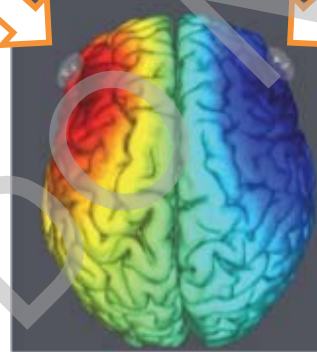
## tACS

180° phase difference



tACS  
@ 0 Degrees  
Phase

tACS  
@ 180 Degrees  
Phase

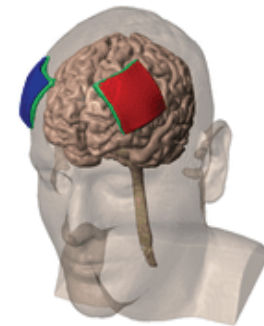
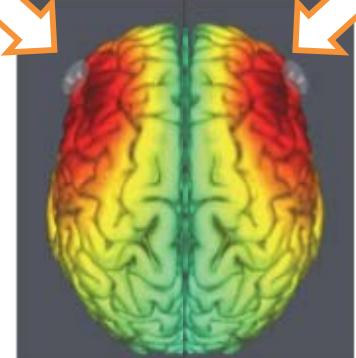


## tRNS

No anode and cathode..

Excitatory  
Effect

Excitatory  
Effect

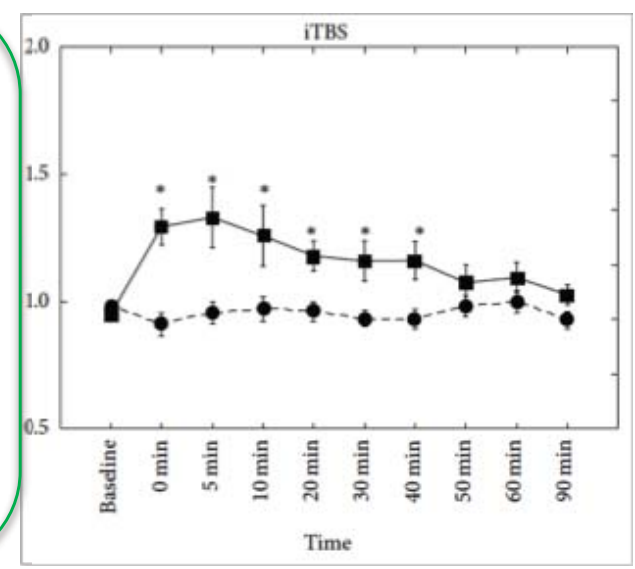
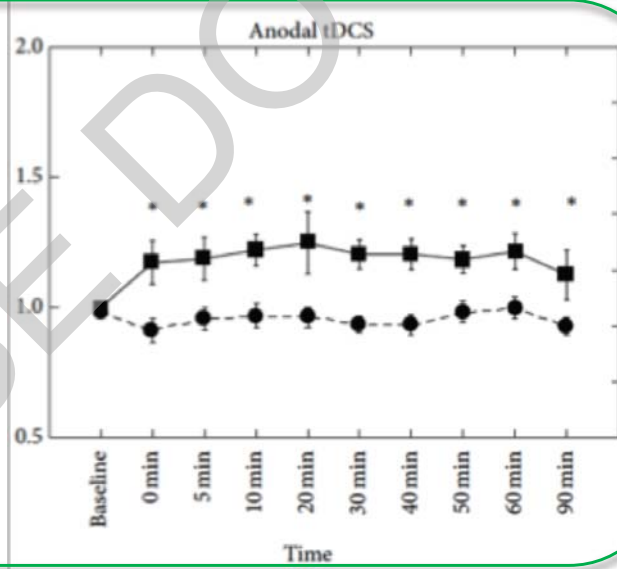
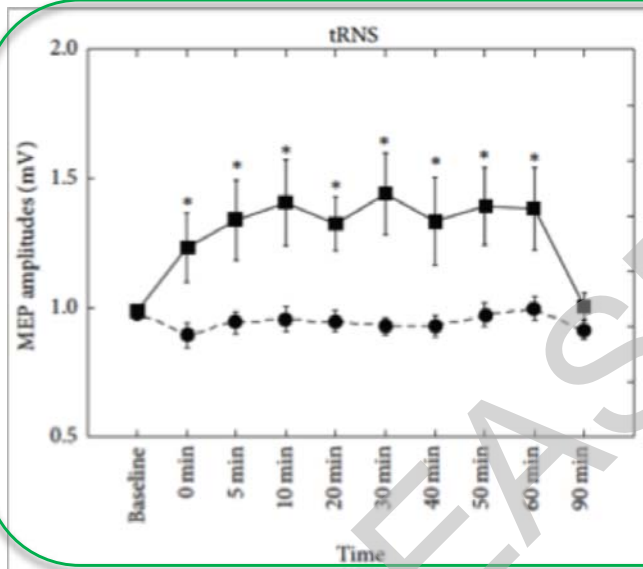


# tRNS vs tDCS: effect on on cortical excitability

Moliadze et al. 2014 *Neural Plast*

## tRNS vs. anodal tDCS vs. iTBS (intermittent Theta Burst TMS)

- tRNS, tDCS: 1mA over Left M1 (4x4cm sponges) and Right orbit (6x14cm) for 10 min.
- iTBS: 3 pulses at 50 Hz repeated at 5 Hz, 80% of the active motor threshold (600 pulses) over the L M1.
- 12 healthy subjects



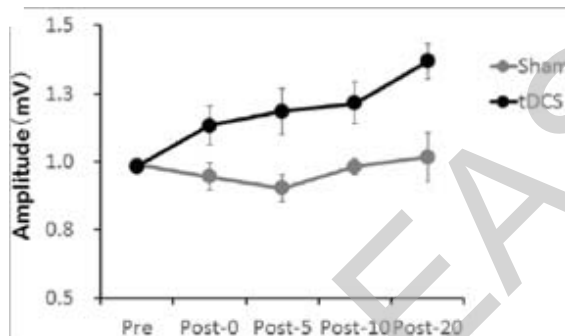
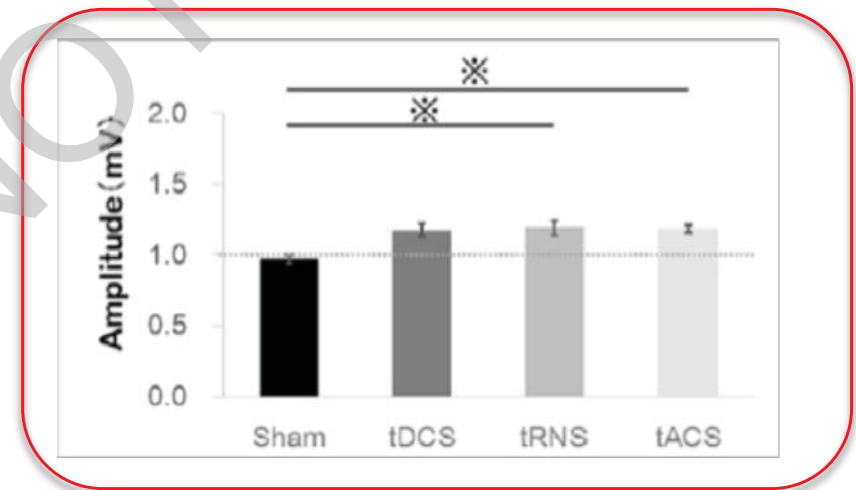
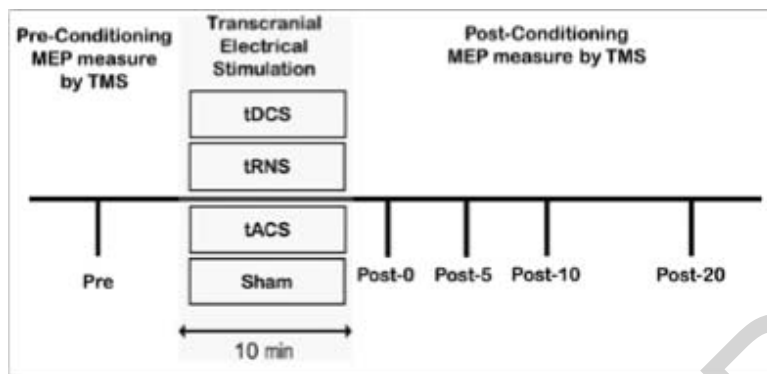
● Sham  
■ atDCS

# tRNS vs tDCS vs tACS: effect on on cortical excitability

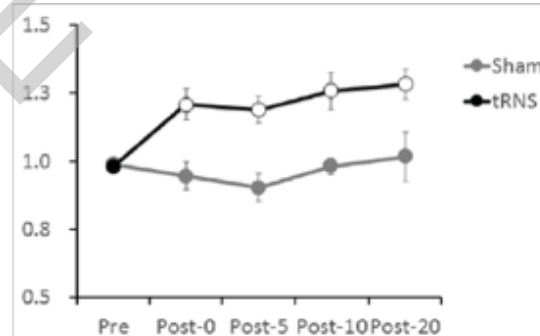
Inukai et al. 2016 *Front Hum Neurosci*

## tRNS vs. tDCS vs. 140Hz tACS

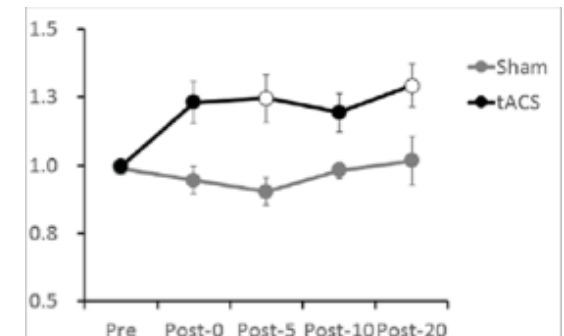
1mA over Left M1 and Right orbit (5x7cm) for 10 min in 15 healthy subjects



↑ MEP size



↑ MEP size



↑ MEP size



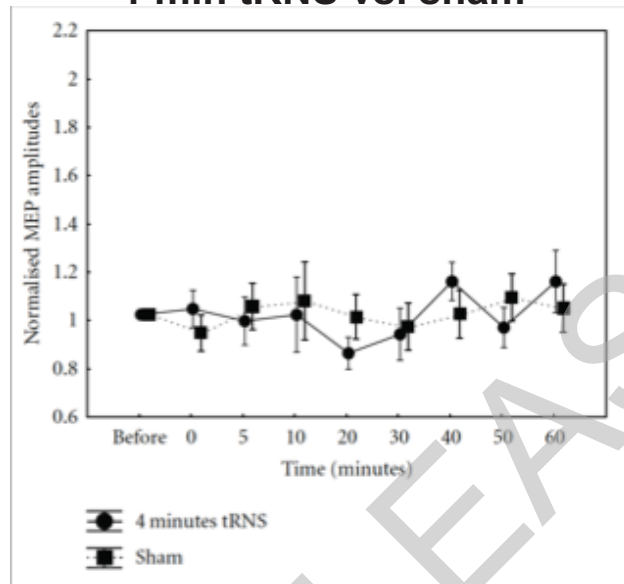
# tRNS vs tDCS vs tACS: effect of stimulation duration

Chaieb et al. 2011 *Neural Plast*

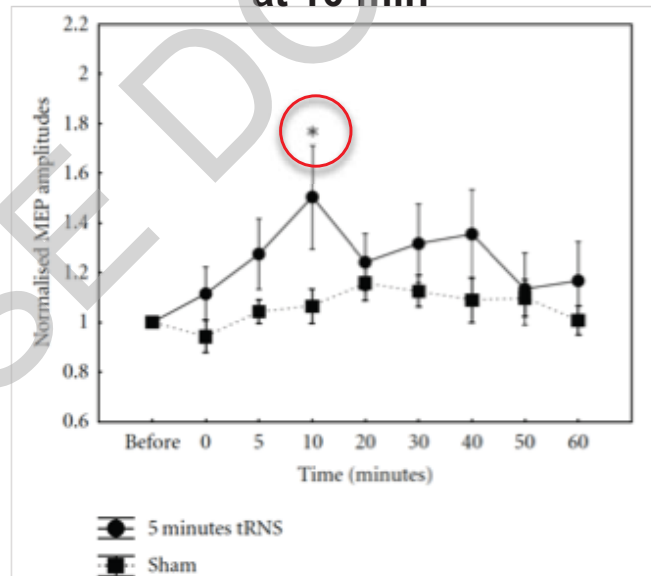
## tRNS vs. sham

1mA over Left M1 (4x4cm) and Right orbit (6x14cm) during 4 min (N=10 subjects),  
5 min, and 6 min (N=12 subjects).

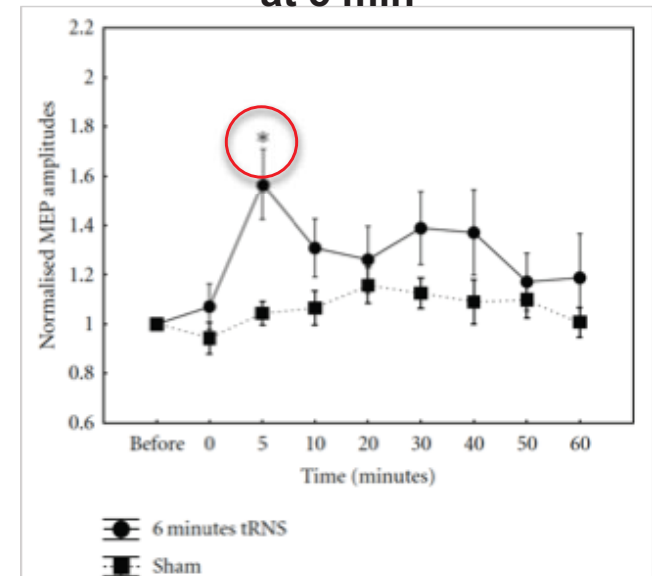
No difference between  
4-min tRNS vs. sham



Difference between  
5-min tRNS vs. sham  
at 10 min



Difference between  
6-min tRNS vs. sham  
at 5 min



Duration

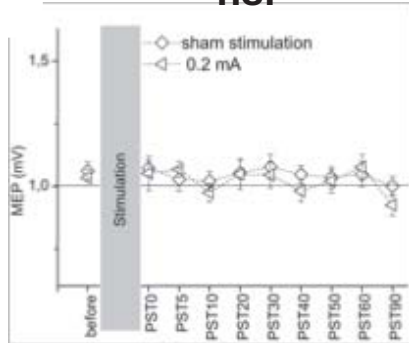
# tRNS vs. 140Hz tACS on cortical excitability: effects of stimulation intensity

Moliadze et al. 2012 *Brain Stimul*

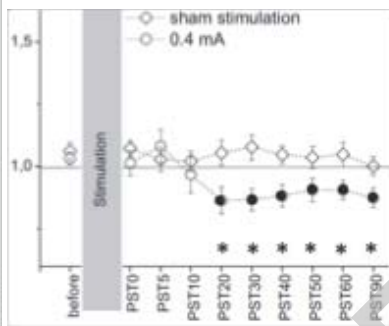
0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1mA over Left M1 (4x4cm) and Right orbit (6x14cm) for 10 min in 14 healthy subjects (tRNS) and 11 healthy subjects (tACS).

## tRNS:

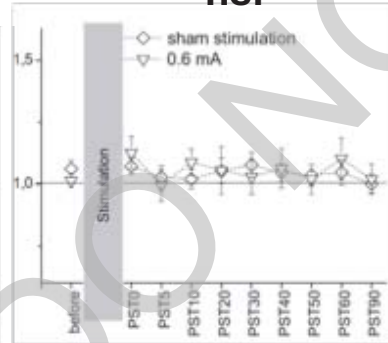
0.2 mA vs. sham:  
ns.



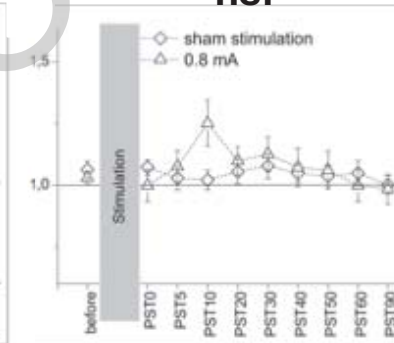
0.4 mA vs. sham:  
↓ MEP



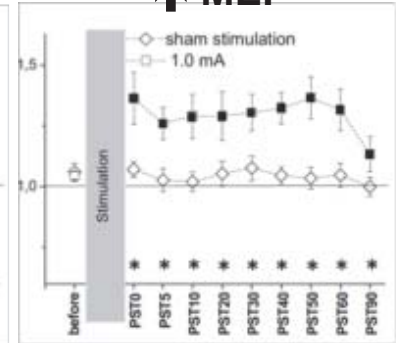
0.6 mA vs. sham:  
ns.



0.8 mA vs. sham:  
ns.

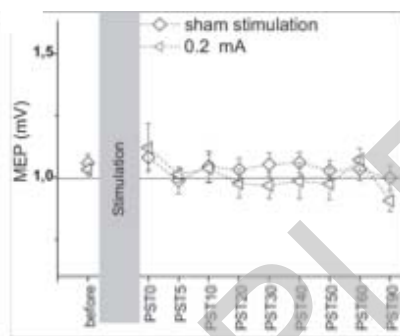


1mA vs. sham:  
↑ MEP

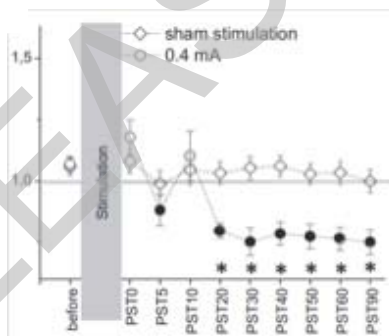


## tACS:

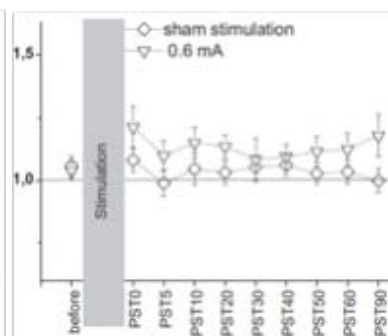
0.2 mA vs. sham:  
ns.



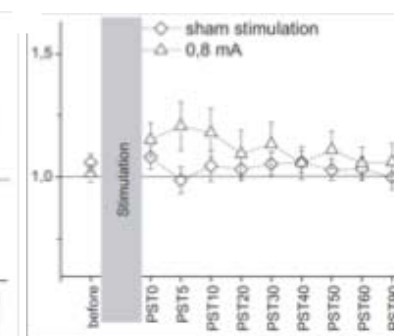
0.4 mA vs. sham:  
↓ MEP



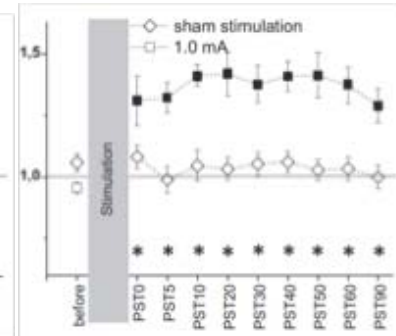
0.6 mA vs. sham:  
ns.



0.8 mA vs. sham:  
ns.



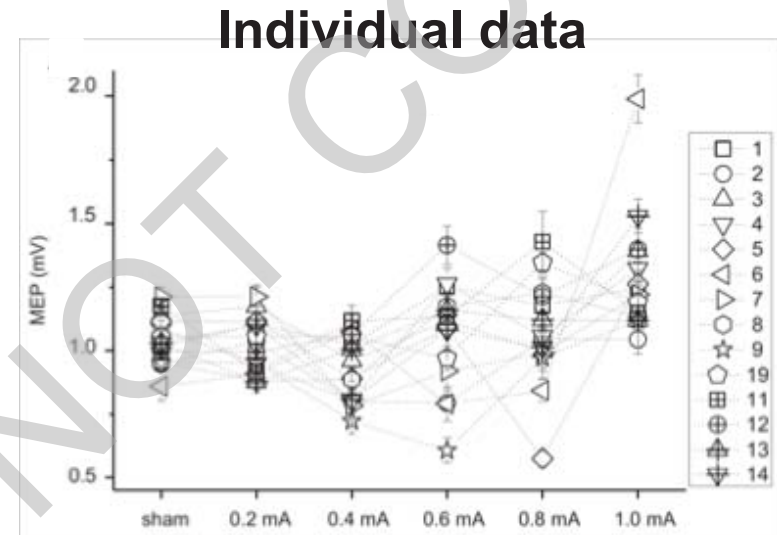
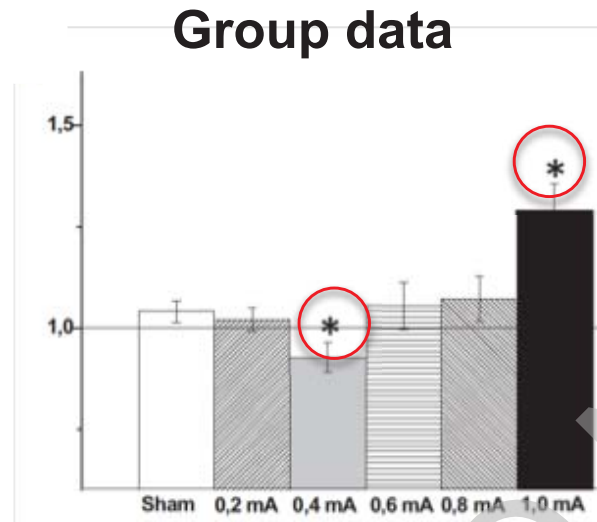
1mA vs. sham:  
↑ MEP



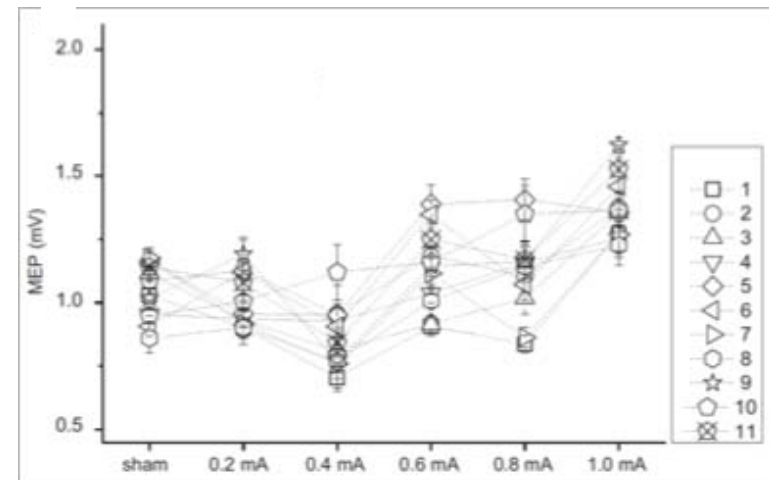
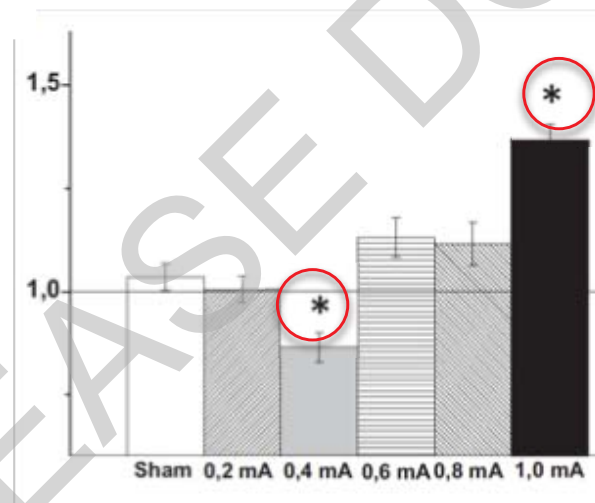
# tRNS vs. 140Hz tACS on cortical excitability: effects of stimulation intensity

Moliadze et al. 2012 *Brain Stimul*

tRNS:



tACS:

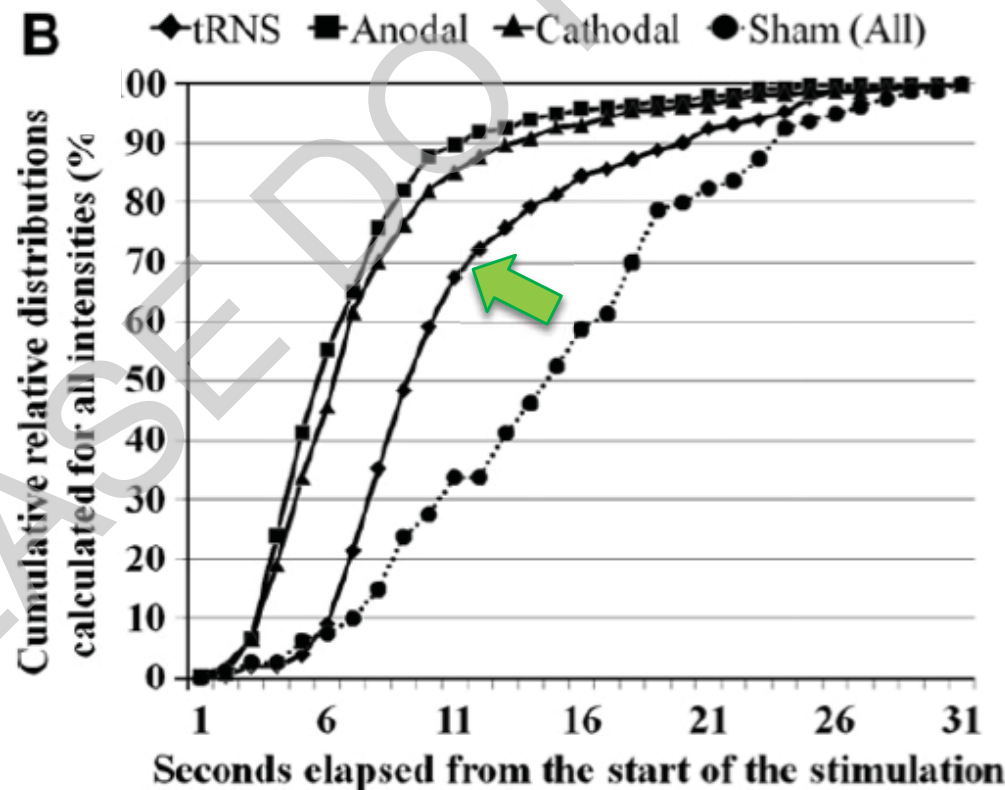


# tRNS: a better SHAM than tDCS/tACS?

Ambrus et al. 2010 *Clin Neurophysiol*

## Cutaneous perception of tRNS vs. anodal tDCS vs. cathodal tDCS

Three groups of 10 healthy subjects (naive, experienced, investigators) received tCS at 200-2000 $\mu$ A over the right primary motor cortex (M1) and left supraorbital area (SOA) (5x7cm sponges).



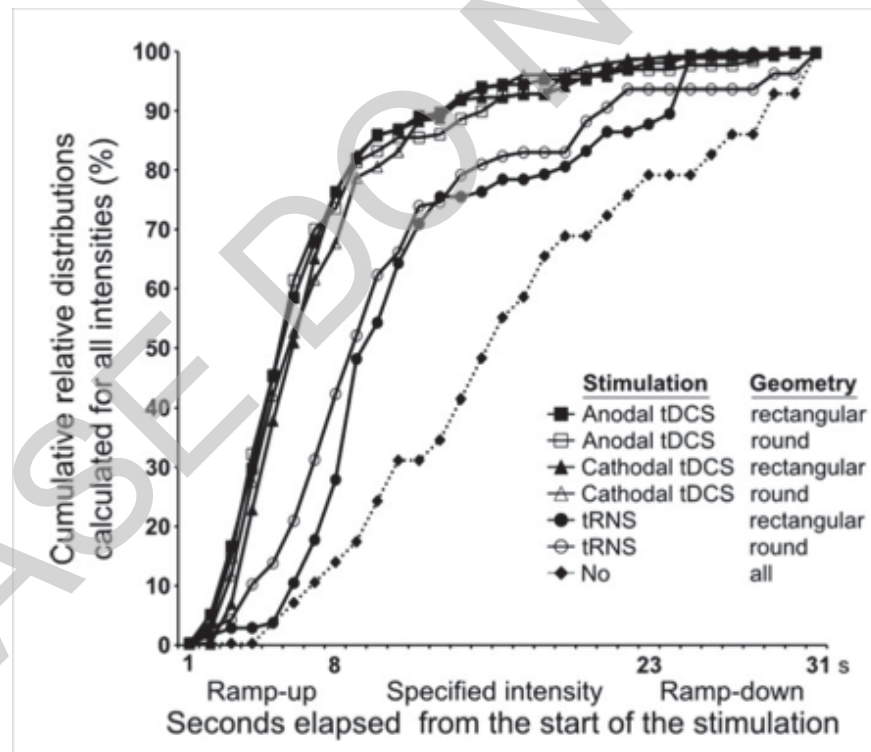
# tRNS: a better SHAM than tDCS/tACS?

Ambrus et al. 2011 *Clin Neurophysiol*

## Cutaneous perception of rectangular vs. round electrodes during anodal tDCS, cathodal tDCS and tRNS.

19 trials of active tCS at 200-2000 $\mu$ A and 7 trials of sham tCS over the right M1 and left SOA in 12 healthy subjects.

- Rectangle electrode: 5x7cm
- Round electrode: d = 6.6755cm



Blinding properties appear similar across electrode conditions



# **tRNS: effects on Cognition**

# Overview

## Categorization learning

Ambrus et al. 2011 *Neuropsychologia*

## Working memory

Mulquiney et al. 2011 *Clin Neurophysiol*

but see Holmes et al. 2016 *J Cogn Neurosci*

## Numerosity and arithmetic

Cappellitti et al. 2013, 2015 *J Neurosci*

Sakar & Kadosh, 2016 *Can J Exp Psychol*

Dormal et al. 2016 *Neuropsychologia*

Popescu et al. 2016 *Neuropsychologia*

review from Looi & Kadosh, 2016 *Prog Brain Res*

## Perceptual learning

Pirulli et al. 2013 *Brain Stimul*

## Auditory processing

Van Doren et al. 2014 *Brain Stimul*

## Face and emotion perception

Romanska et al. 2015 *Cereb Cortex*

Prete et al. 2017 *Brain Stimul*

Penton et al. 2017 *Sci Rep*

## Political belief

Chawke & Kanai, 2016 *Front Hum Neurosci*

## Visual motion adaptation

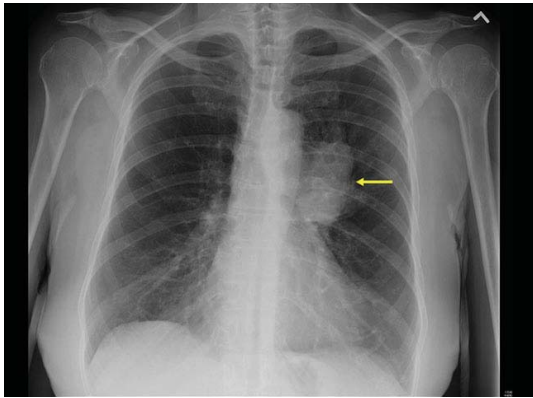
Campana et al. 2016 *Sci Rep*

## Reward learning

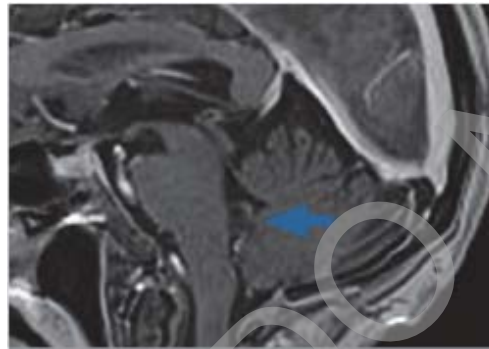
van Koningsbruggen et al. 2016 *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci*

# tRNS and Perceptual Learning

Process by which training leads to *improvement* in abilities to detect, discriminate and identify sensory stimuli



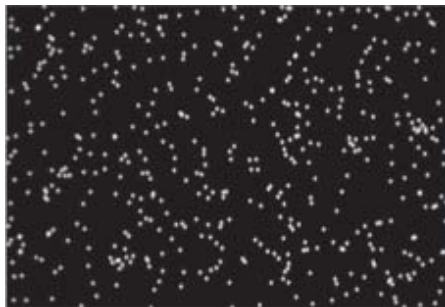
Radiologist can spot a tumor more efficiently



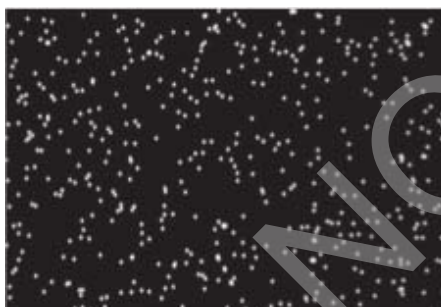
PL to help recover functions in amblyopia

# Coherent Motion Detection in Noise

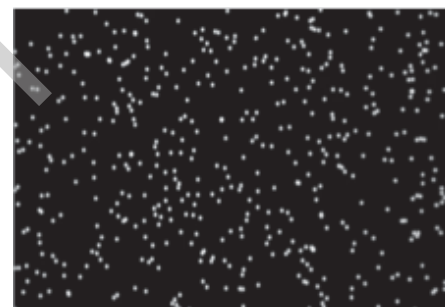
Weak Signal



Moderate Signal



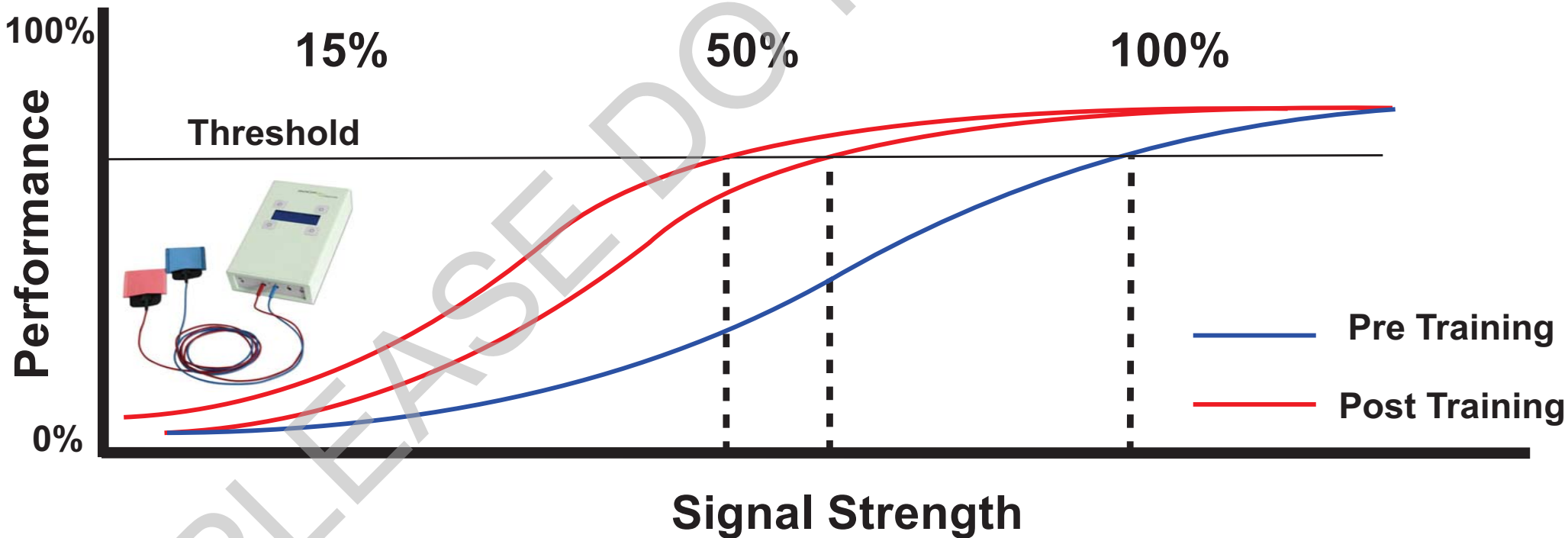
Strong Signal



15%

50%

100%



# tRNS to boost PL in healthy subjects



Florian Heprich

**Fixation**

1000 ms

500 ms

350 trials/day



Pre-Training Baseline

**N = 45**

~ tES

**20 Mins.  
@ 1mA.**

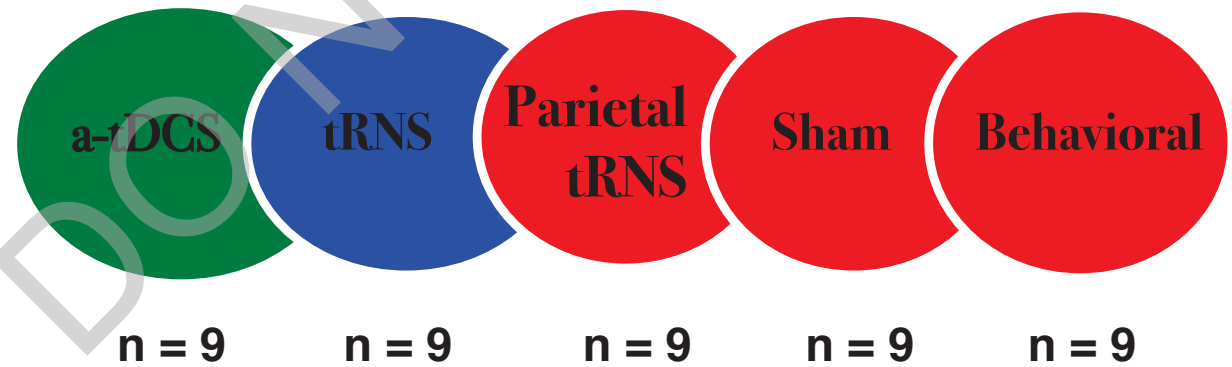
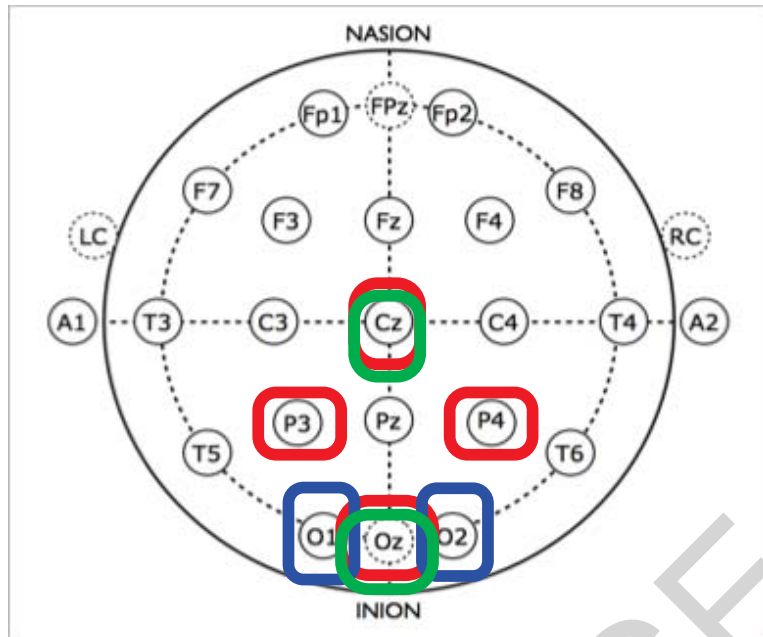
10 Days of Training  
Task + tES

6 Months  
Follow Up



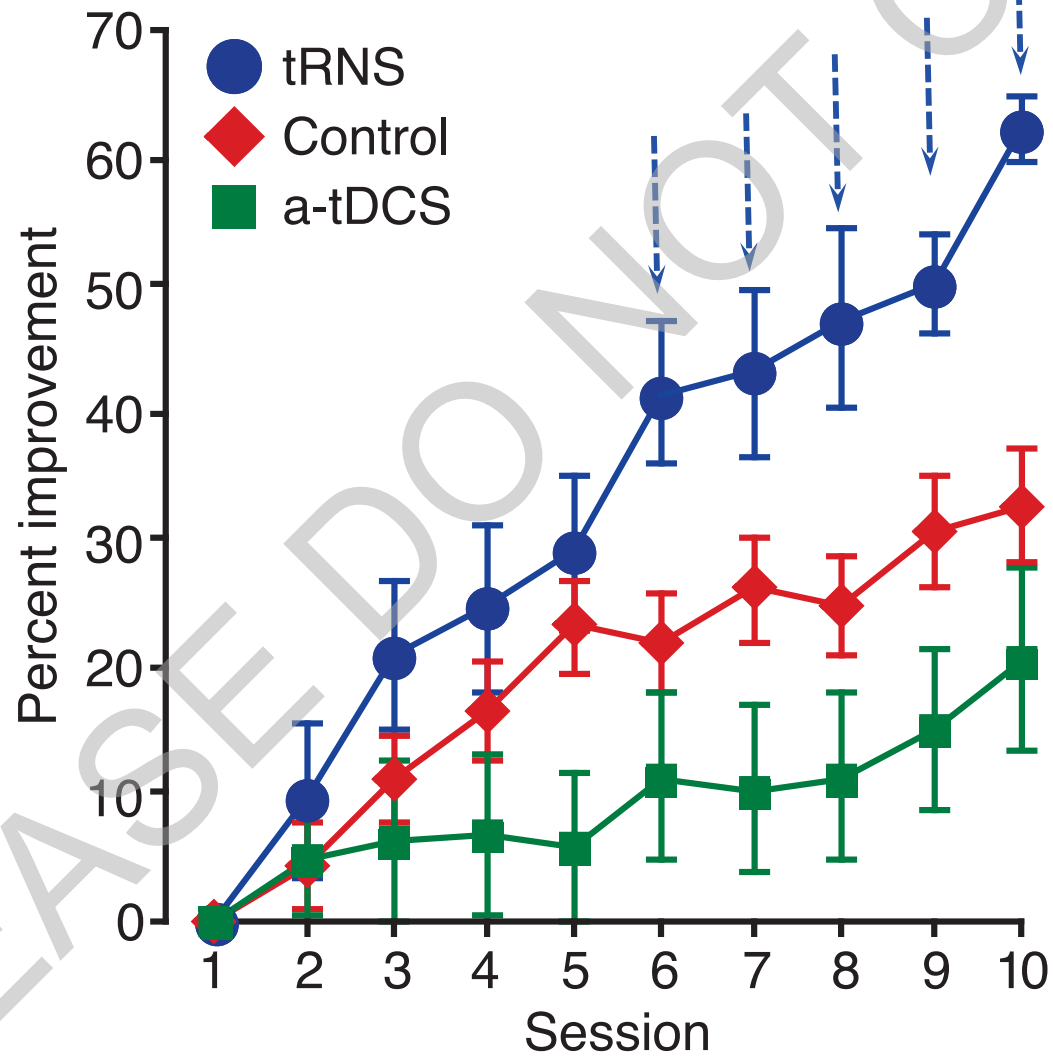
# Stimulation Protocol

Herpich et al., Journal of Neuroscience 2019



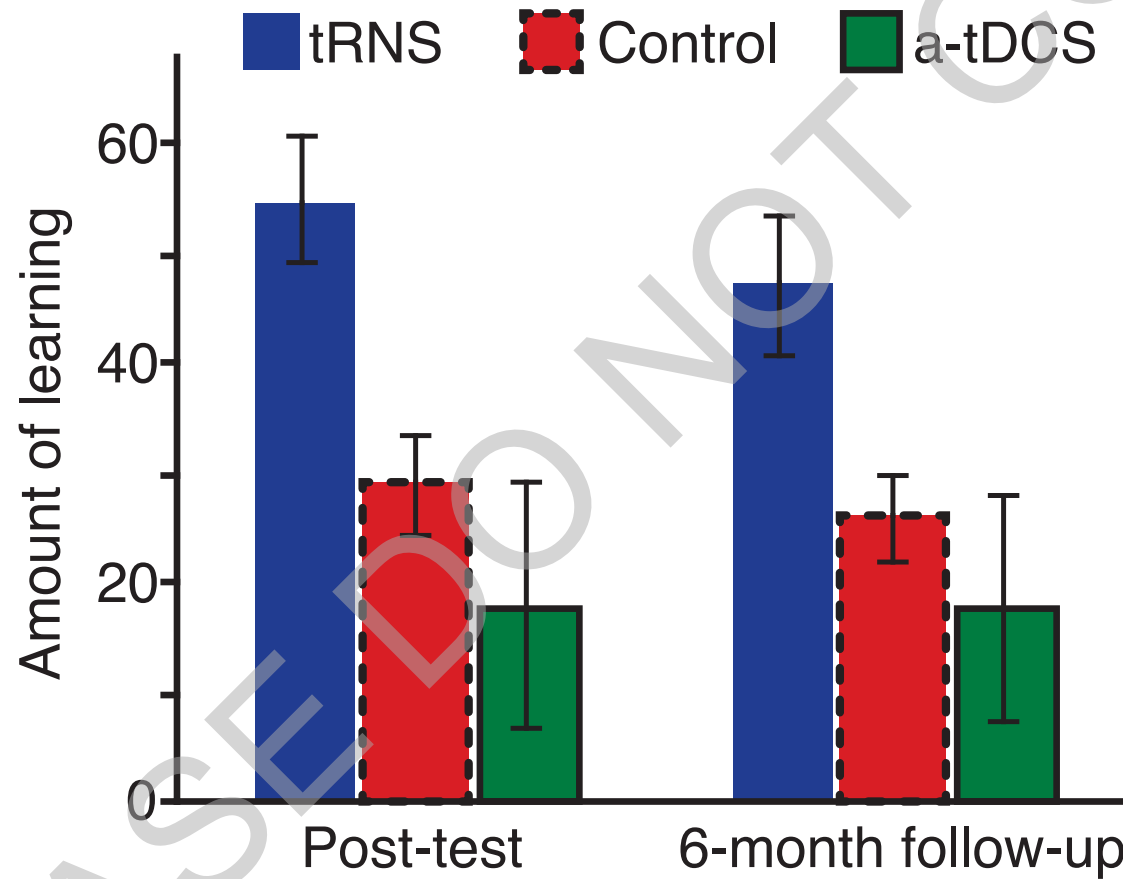
# Results

Herpich et al., Journal of Neuroscience 2019



# Long-lasting effects

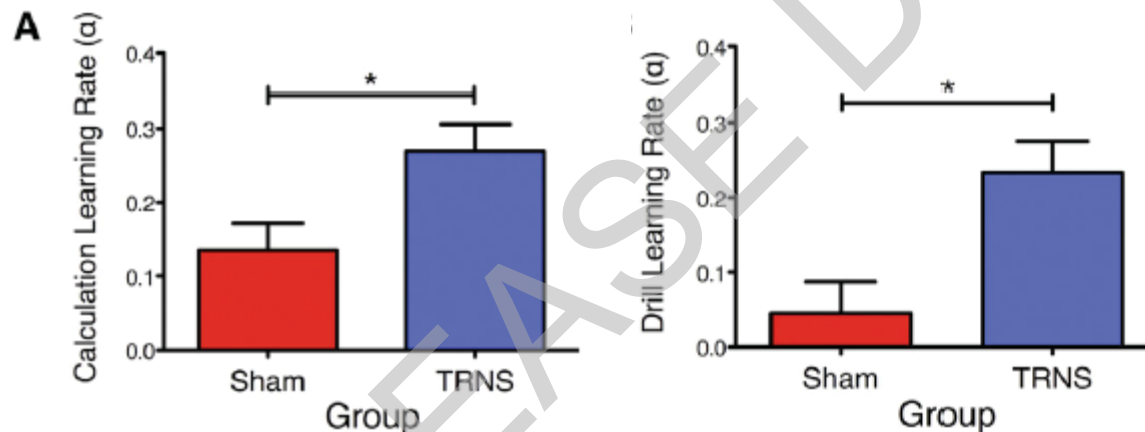
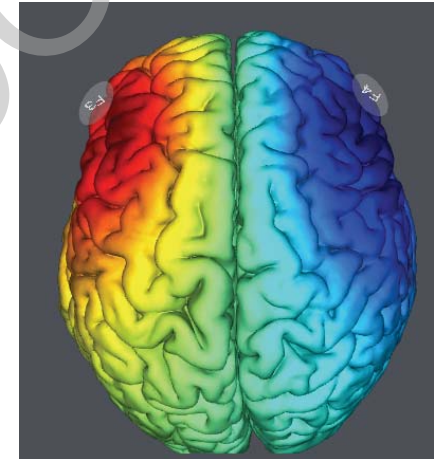
Herpich et al., Journal of Neuroscience 2019



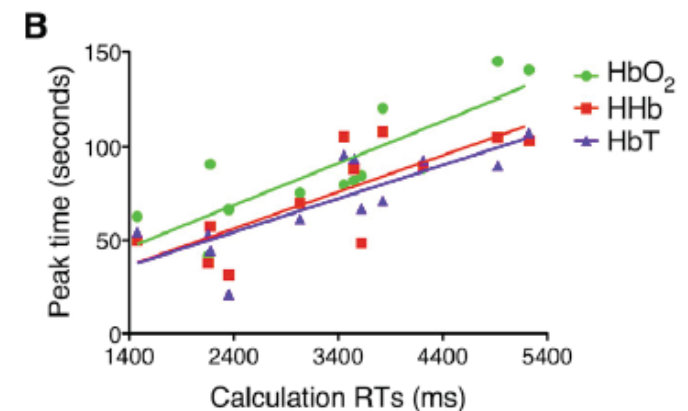
# tRNS and Arithmetic training

Snowball et al., 2013

- tRNS on **Bilateral Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex (DLPFC)**, a key region in **Arithmetic**.
- **5 Days of training** (Calculation and Memory-recall-based arithmetic training) + **tRNS/Sham**
- Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS) recording during training



Calculation learning rates increase during tRNS

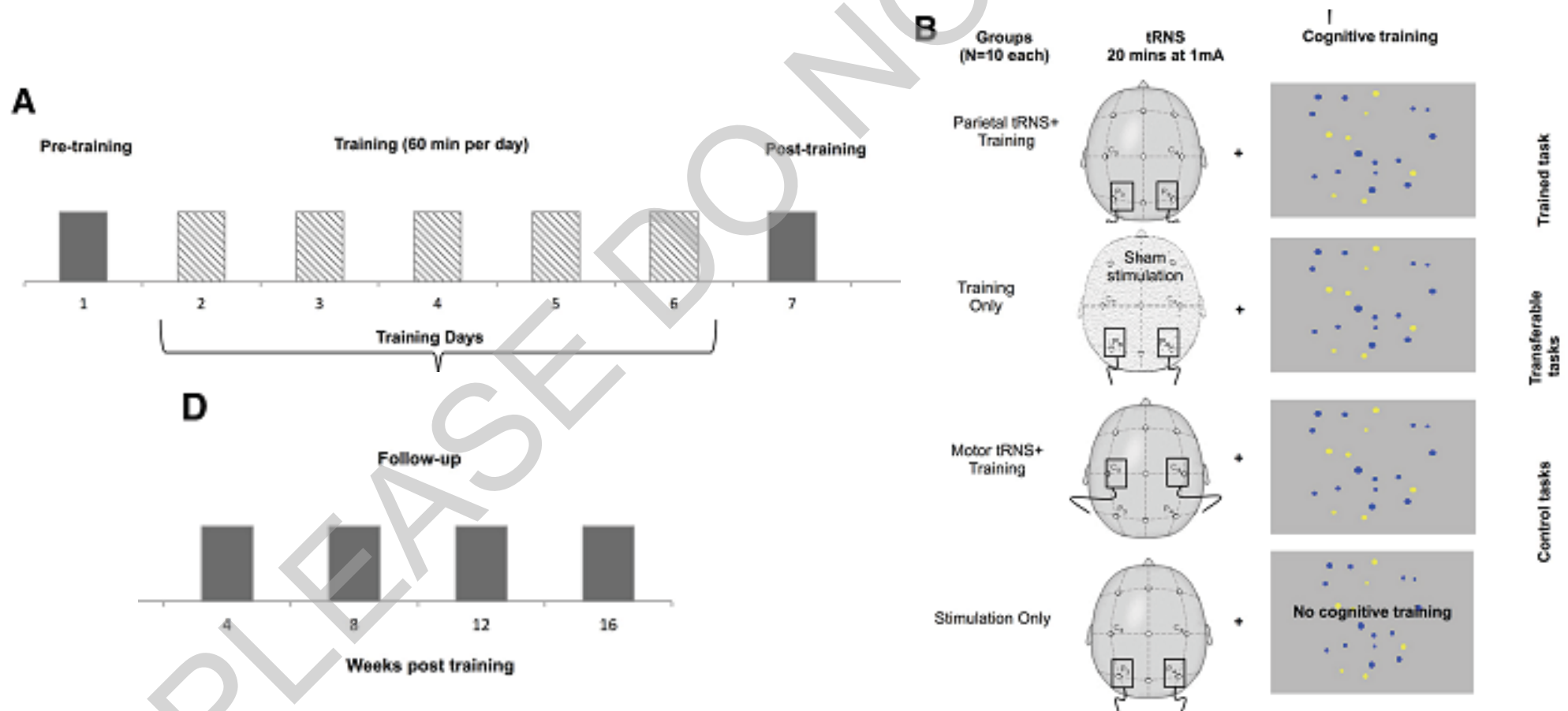


tRNS effect correlates with changes in the hemodynamic response

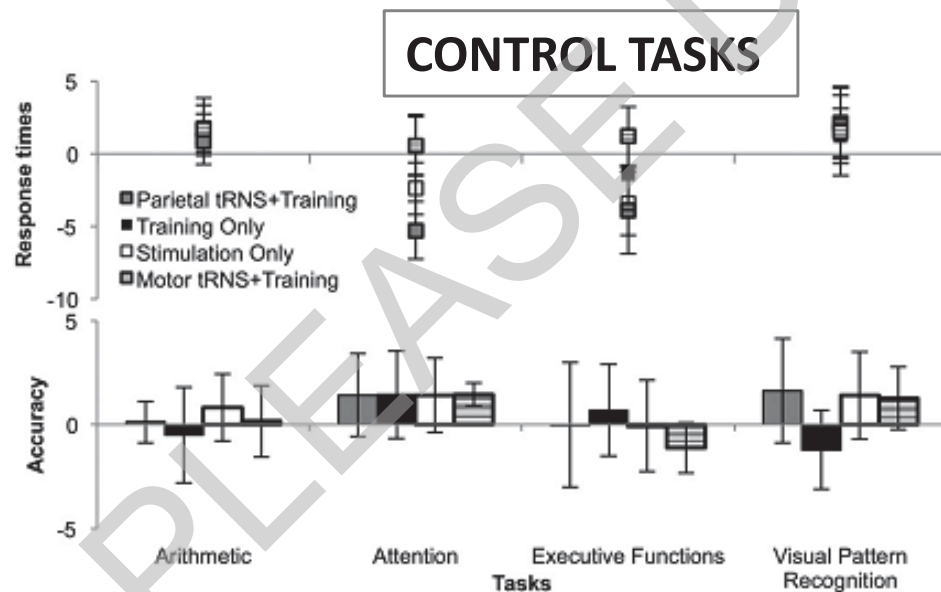
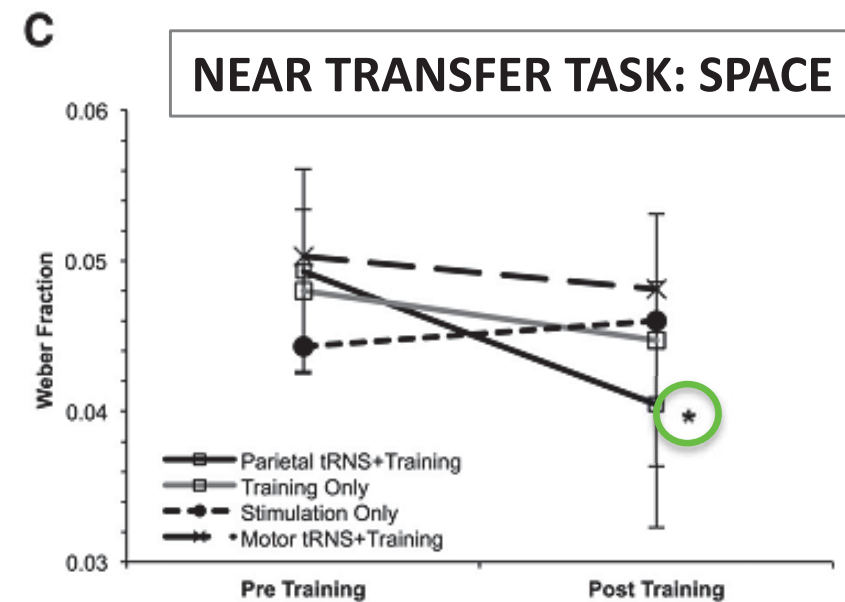
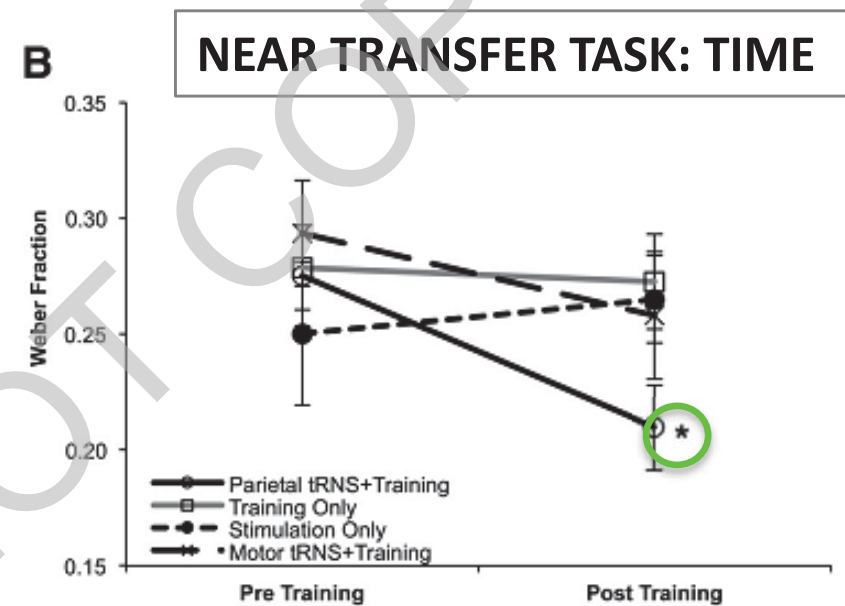
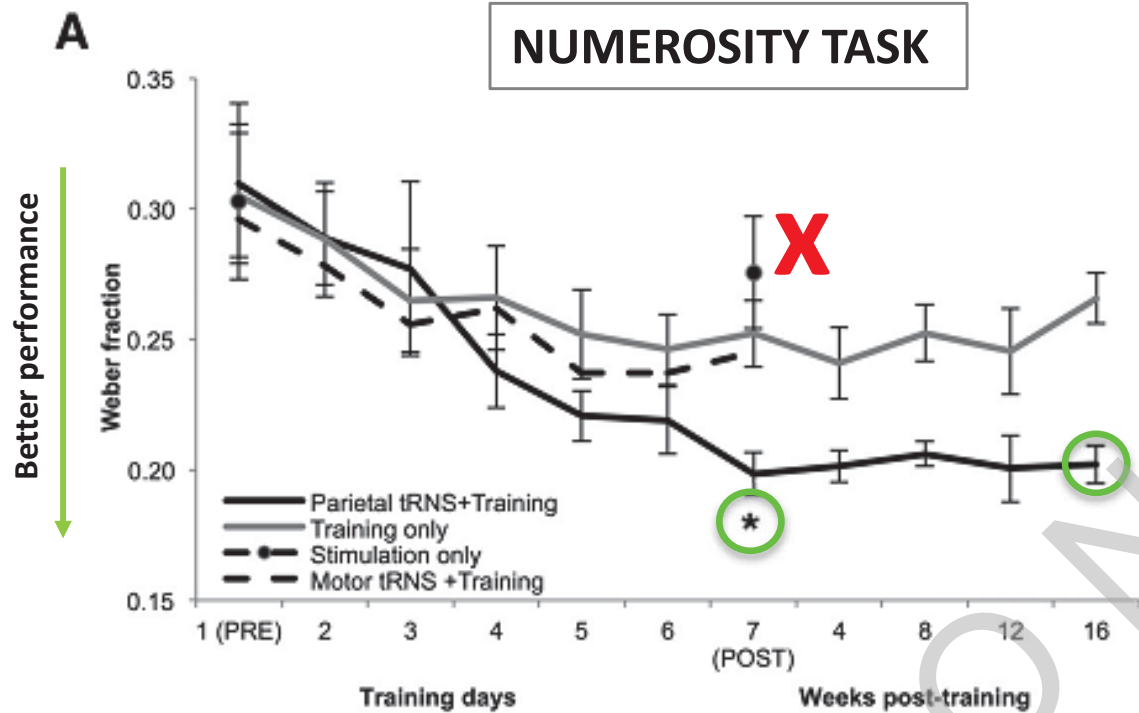
# tRNS and Perceptual Learning

Cappelletti et al. 2013

- Training of “ability to discriminate numerosity” (6 days)
- Key region → **Parietal lobe**
- Tested for other Parietal lobe functions linked to **quantity judgement** (time and space discrimination) as well as other quantity judgment unrelated functions.
- Stimulation= **High frequency tRNS**




# tRNS contributes to Cognitive/Skill Transfer



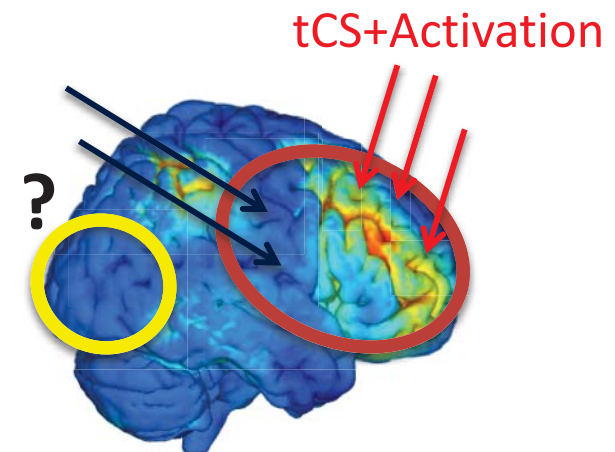


# Is tCS alone not enough..?

- Better and longer lasting improvement (up to 16 weeks post-training) for tRNS+training compared to (1) ***cognitive training without stimulation***, (2) **cognitive training coupled to stimulation of a control site** (motor areas), (3) ***stimulation in absence of cognitive training***.
- Task improvement induced by parietal tRNS + Training **transferred to proficiency in other parietal lobe-based quantity judgment**, i.e., time and space discrimination, but not to quantity-unrelated tasks measuring attention, executive functions, and visual pattern recognition.



Can be a matter of **Dose** (tCS alone may require longer stimulation time?) and **precision** in terms of targeting.



**tRNS: clinical applications**

# Overview

## Auditory related disorders, tinnitus

Vanneste et al. 2013 *Front Psychiatry*

Joos et al. 2015 *Exp Brain Res*

To et al. 2017 *J Neural Transm*

Case report: Kreuzer et al. 2017 *Pain Physician*

\* review from Heimrath et al. 2016 *Front Cell Neurosci*

## Parkinson's disease

trend in MEP size for 8 patients: Stephani et al. 2011 *Parkinsonism Relat Disord*

## Major depressive disorders

case report: Chan et al. 2012 *Brain Stimul*

## Schizophrenia

two case studies: Palm et al. 2013 *Schizophr Res*

## Pain

trend in multiple sclerosis: Palm et al. 2016 *Restor Neurol Neurosci*

Fibromyalgia Curatolo et al. 2017 *Clin Exp Rheumatol*

## Stroke

case series: Hayward et al. 2017 *J Neuroeng Rehabil*

## Children with mathematical learning disabilities

Looi et al. 2017 *Sci Rep*

# tRNS on tinnitus

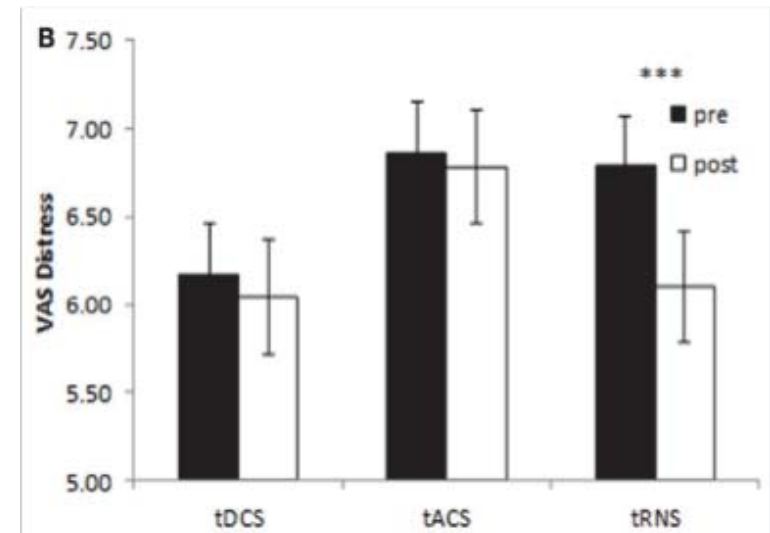
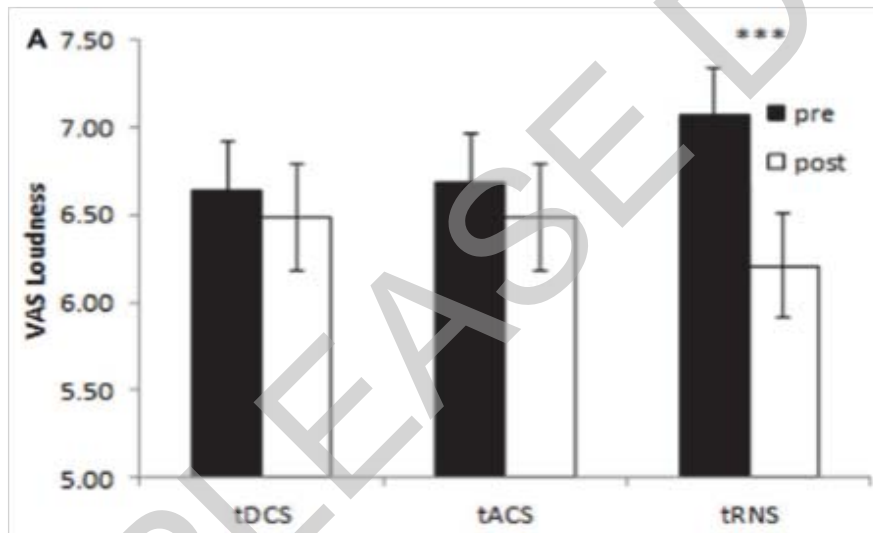
Vanneste et al. 2013

Single session over Temporal lobe bilaterally (electrodes T3 and T4), at 1.5mA (35cm<sup>2</sup>) for 20 min.

111 patients with tinnitus divided in 3 groups:

1. tDCS (N=36; → T4: N=16; → T3: N=20)
2. 6-13Hz tACS (N=37)
3. tRNS (N=38)

↓ tinnitus loudness and distress with tRNS



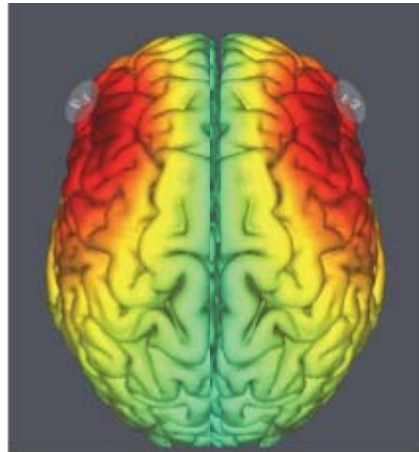
# tRNS in the Atypical brain

Looi et al. 2017

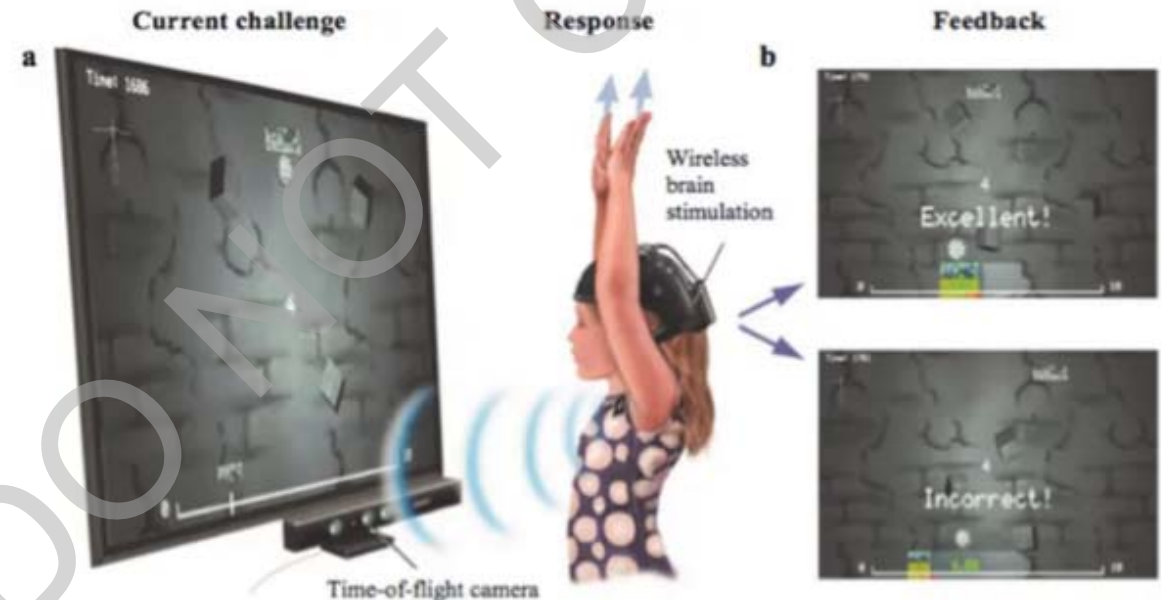
Article | OPEN | Published: 05 July 2017

## Transcranial random noise stimulation and cognitive training to improve learning and cognition of the atypically developing brain: A pilot study

Chung Yen Looi, Jenny Lim, Francesco Sella, Simon Lolliot, Mihaela Duta, Alexander Alexandrovich Avramenko & Roi Cohen Kadosh



**Figure 1**



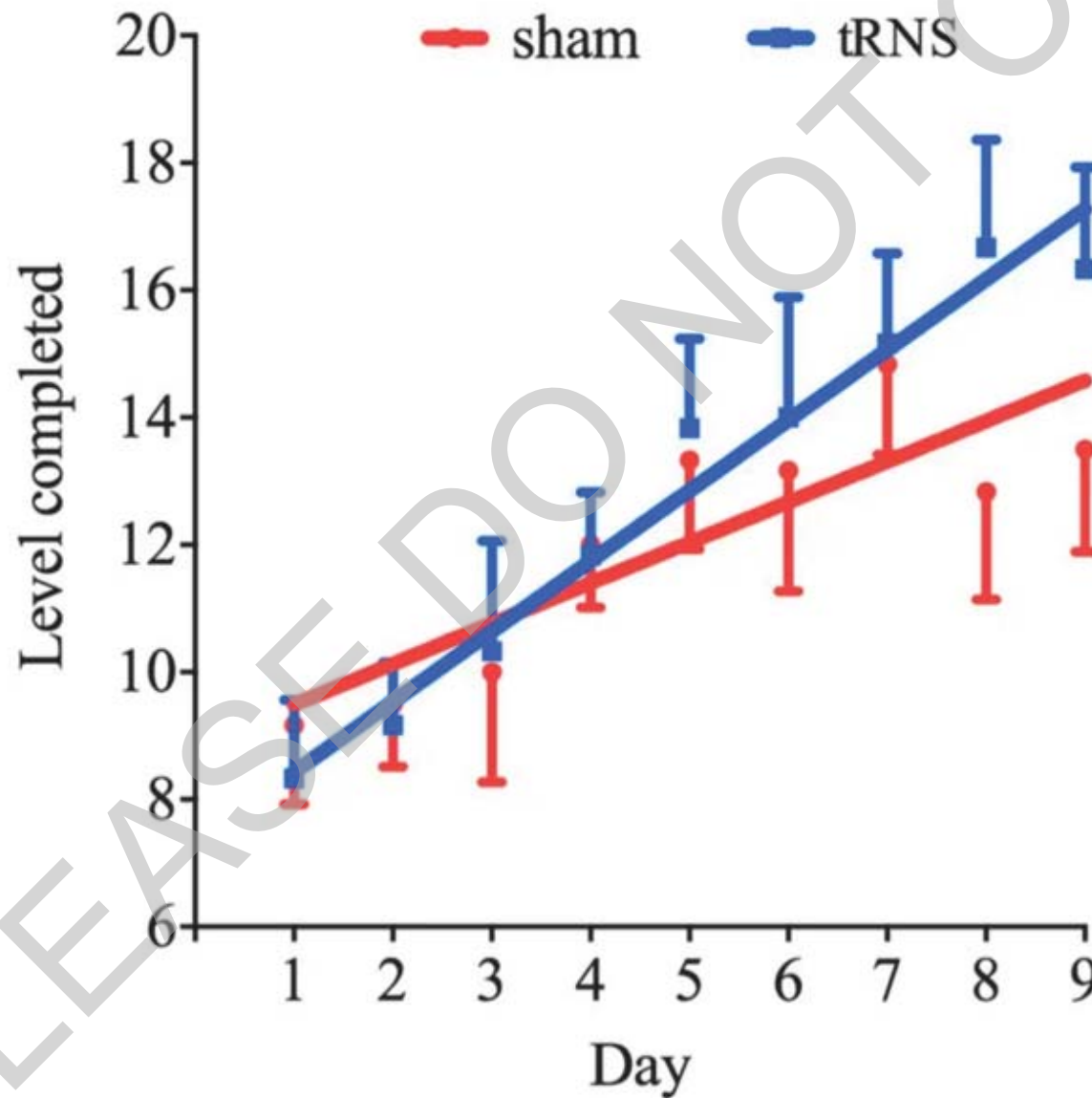
Transcranial random noise stimulation coupled with cognitive training to improve learning of children with mathematical learning disabilities at school (a) Illustration of a child moving from side-to-side to map a number on a number line while receiving transcranial random noise stimulation from a wireless brain stimulator. Response was registered for each trial when both hands were raised. Body movements were detected by a time-of-flight camera, Kinect™. (b) Examples of feedback on correct and incorrect responses. The game was adaptive to children's performance; every 3 consecutive correct answers promoted the following trial to a more difficult level and vice versa.

tRNS over bilateral DLPFC

# tRNS in the Atypical brain

Looi et al. 2017

Figure 3

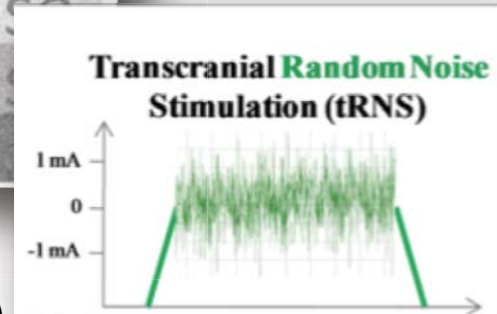
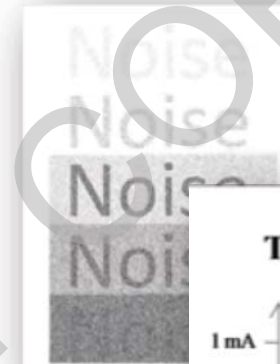




# Summary

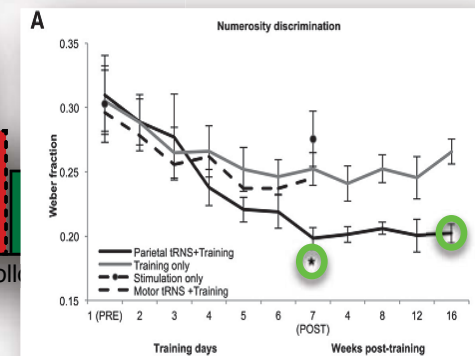
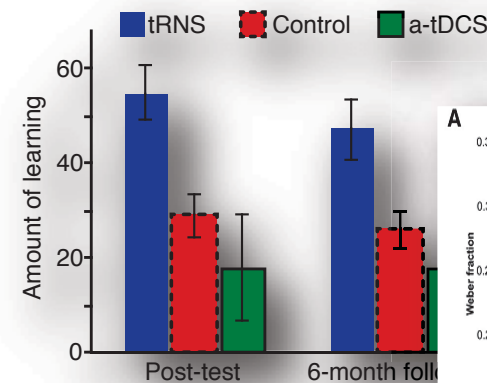
## 1. Principles of tRNS

- Stochastic Resonance phenomenon
  - Noise can be beneficial in nonlinear systems
  - Applying noise to the brain improves performance
  - The effect can be long-lasting
  - tRNS has some advantages over tDCS and tACS (e.g. blinding)

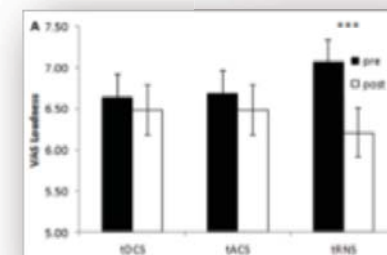


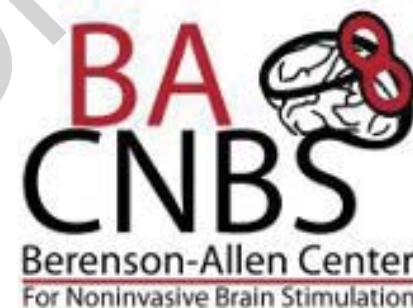
## 2. tRNS Effects

- Cortico-Spinal Excitability
- Perception
- Cognition



## 3. Promising Therapeutic Opportunities





**Thank you for your attention!**

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