International Literature Reviews

Ian Wickramasekera, II

Abbasi, M., Ghazi, F., Barlow-Harrison, A., Sheikhvatan, M., & Mohammadyari, F. (2009). The effect of hypnosis on pain relief during labor and childbirth in Iranian pregnant women. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(2):174-183. The authors instructed six Iranian women in the use of self-hypnosis to help with pain during their pregnancy. The six women all reported beneficial effects from their practice of self-hypnosis. The authors reported finding that these women described their feelings about hypnosis during labor as: “a sense of relief and consolation, self-confidence, satisfaction, lack of suffering labor pain, changing the feeling of pain into one of pressure, a decrease in fear of natural childbirth, lack of tiredness, and lack of anxiety” (p. 174). Studies like these reveal something positive about the cross-cultural potential of hypnosis. hypnotic susceptibility seems to exist in rather similar distributions across cultures and many studies have shown that hypnotic interventions are effective with any cultural group when correctly applied by a skilled clinician. Address for reprints: Dr. M. Abbasi, Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom. Email address: M.abbasi@mdx.ac.uk.

Abramowitz, E.G., Barak, Y., Ben-Avi, I., & Knobler, H.Y. (2009). Hypnotherapy in the treatment of chronic combat-related PTSD patients suffering from insomnia: A randomized, zolpidem-controlled clinical trial. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(3):184-197. The authors of this study wished to examine whether hypnosis could produce additional beneficial effects compared to the standard of care for patients with chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Each of the 30 patients in this study had chronic PTSD and had been treated with a combination of pharmacotherapy and supportive psychotherapy in the past. The patients were randomly selected into a standard of care treatment group and a standard of care plus hypnosis treatment group. The standard of care plus hypnosis treatment group received twice weekly, one and a half hour sessions of hypnosis. The authors reported that indeed the participants in the hypnosis group did make significant gains compared to the standard of care group. The patients reported improvements in a variety of sleep-related variables in addition to a reduction in intrusive and avoidance related symptoms of PTSD. Address for reprints: Dr. Abramowitz, Israel Defense Forces, Mental Health Department, Israel. Email Address: eitanmd@zahav.net.il.
Cardeña, E., & Terhune, D.B. (2009). A note of caution on the Waterloo-Stanford Group Scale of hypnotic susceptibility: A brief communication. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(3):222-226. A small number of investigators such as Helen Crawford had previously examined the incidence rate of negative sequelae (after-effects) that occasionally occur when participants undertake standardized hypnotic assessment using instruments like the Stanford Form C. These effects are usually fairly uncommon and transitory in nature and include such symptoms as negative affect, tiredness, stiffness, and minor pains. However, stronger negative sequelae have been reported to happen less occasionally than this although it has been noted that some instruments appear to be potentially more obtrusive than others. For instance, the Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory – Hypnotic Assessment Procedure (Pekala, 1995) was deliberately designed to be a less obtrusive measure than the Harvard or Stanford instruments although negative sequelae still do occasionally occur with the PCI-HAP. In this brief report the authors caution the readers that the Waterloo-Stanford Group Scale of hypnotic susceptibility does appear to have negative sequelae with some participants as does its parent scale the Stanford Form C. In particular, they mention that the age regression item may contribute to some participants’ negative experiences with hypnosis. The authors recommend that a skilled clinician be present for all testing sessions when the Waterloo-Stanford Group Scale of hypnotic susceptibility is used to minimize any distressing symptoms which may occur. Address for reprints: Dr. Etzel Cardeña, Lund University, Department of Psychology, Box 213, SE-221 00, Lund. Email Address: Etzel.Cardena@psychology.lu.se.

**Reference**


Carruthers, H.R., Miller, V., Morris, J., Evans, R., Tarrier, N., & Whorwell, P.J. (2009). Using art to help understand the imagery of irritable bowel syndrome and its response to hypnotherapy. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(2):262-273. This creative clinical study treated patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) with methods of art therapy as well as hypnosis. The study employed a medical artist who asked 109 patients to describe an image of their IBS symptoms before and after their treatment with hypnosis for IBS. The artist reported having prior training in producing precise watercolor paintings of the patients’ descriptions of their IBS symptoms. The authors report that 49% of patients did report having an image and these were then recorded and painted. Patients who reported color images of their IBS received better outcomes with hypnosis ($p = .05$) than patients who reported monochrome imagery. The authors were particularly keen to help the patients process their feelings about IBS to help them develop insight about their problem. These methods seem especially creative as the authors paired methods of hypnosis with an art therapy technique. It is possible that these methods may tap some patients’ creative potential in a unique fashion that might be more beneficial for some patients than using hypnosis by itself. Address for reprints: Dr. P. J. Whorwell, Neurogastroenterology Unit, Gastrointestinal Sciences, School of Translational Medicine, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

during hypnotic paralysis. *Neuron, 62*(6): 862-875. This study examined neural processing that occurs during hypnotic inductions of paralysis by using evidence gathered from functional magnetic resonance imaging (FMRI). Previous authors have proposed that subjects may be using processes of selective attention/inhibition or disconnection of their various psychomotor operations. Thus, these subjects may be allowing their mind to experience hypnotic suggestions as involuntary even though they are voluntarily produced. The authors wished to examine the neural correlates of hypnotic paralysis to gather evidence to further guide our understanding of that phenomena. The participants in this study were asked to perform a voluntary movement under a go-no-go task while their neural activity was measured with methods of FMRI. The experimental design included three conditions: normal state, hypnotic left-hand paralysis, and feigned paralysis. Interestingly, preparatory activation arose in right motor cortex even when the participants were undergoing the experience of left hypnotic paralysis which the authors took to indicate that there were “preserved motor intentions.” This is a finding of interest given that a number of previous studies done on readiness potentials by Benjamin Libet and others have demonstrated that motor intentions often appear to occur prior to an individual’s awareness that they are about to make a voluntarily movement. It would thus appear that the hypnotic suggestions in this experiment did not affect these early motor processing and preparatory effects. However, the authors also report “concomitant increases in precuneus regions that normally mediate imagery and self-awareness” in the data coming from the hypnotic paralysis condition. The authors conclude that their results suggest that hypnosis might enhance self-monitoring processes and allow internal representations, generated by suggestions, to guide behavior. Further, this does not act through direct motor inhibition. In this sense, the mechanisms of dissociative control would be substantially later in the processing stages proposed by some theorists. However, more investigation seems warranted in this area since the precise wording of suggestions may in fact cue for the different types of hypnotic paralysis. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the work done with hypnotic pain analgesia by Pierre Rainville and others. In these experiments the precise wording of suggestions for the relief of pain-affect or pain-sensations has different effects upon the neural processes that are used in studies of hypnotic analgesia. Address for reprints: Dr. Y. Cojan, Department of Neuroscience, University Medical School, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland. Email Address: yann.cojan@unige.ch.

Dale, H.L., Adair, P.M., Humphris, & G.M. (2009). Systematic review of post-treatment psychosocial and behavior change interventions for men with cancer. *Psycho-oncology, July 9, 2009* (E-publication ahead of publication). This paper examined the use of a variety of psychological and mind/body approaches to treat adults who are suffering from cancer. The authors focused on single adult men in their review since previous studies have found that single adult men often exhibit higher rates of mortality and psychosocial maladjustment compared to their married or partnered cohorts. They selected 11 studies which met their criteria for inclusion in their analyses out of an initial pool of around 10,000 which had been identified with database search terms. The 11 studies which they selected employed a wide range of techniques including cognitive behavior therapy, hypnosis, and/or other psycho-educational interventions. The authors reported that all 11 studies found some positive results despite having some methodological shortcomings which limited their value.

Unfortunately, none of the studies focused on interventions with single adult men and most provided sparse details about the nature of the interventions they employed. The
The authors conclude that the effectiveness of interventions was difficult to assess. This was due to the fact that while all had benefits their generalizability was limited due by methodological and reporting limitations. Address for reprints: Dr. G. M. Humphris, Clinical Psychology Department, Edinburgh Cancer Centre, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh and Health Psychology, Bute Medical School, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, UK. Email address: gmh4@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Dobbin, A., Maxwell, M., & Elton, R. (2009) A benchmarked feasibility study of a self-hypnosis treatment for depression in primary care. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(3): 293-318. This study examined the effectiveness of self-hypnosis in a primary care setting in Edinburgh, Scotland. The authors examined the effectiveness of their methods using a partially randomized preference (PRP) study design while benchmarking their results to trials of cognitive behavior therapy and counseling. The patients were all seen in a primary care setting and had reported symptoms of depression to their general practitioner. They were then told about the experiment and offered random assignment to either self-hypnosis or antidepressant medication or to freely choose their assignment as part of the PRP design. The participants were asked to complete the Beck Depression Inventory, Brief Symptom Inventory, and SF-36 to measure their depressive symptoms. The authors report that 50 patients chose self-hypnosis out of the 58 who were recruited for the study. This seems consistent with prior research done on self-selection design effects in hypnosis research. Participants who choose to be involved with hypnosis studies usually exhibit attitudes and beliefs about hypnosis which are quite favorable in nature. Only four patients chose antidepressants while another 4 were randomized. The authors concluded that the PRP study design appeared to be a useful tool in primary care settings where previous studies have had problems of recruitment, concordance, and compliance. Address for reprints: Dr. A. Dobbin, National Health Service, United Kingdom. Email address: alastair.dobbin@lothian.scot.nhs.uk.

Jensen, M.P., Barber, J., Romano, J.M., Hanley, M.A., Raichle, K.A., Molton, I.R., Engel, J.M., Osborne, T.L., Stoelb, B.L., Cardenas, D.D., & Patterson, D.R. (2009). Effects of self-hypnosis training and EMG biofeedback relaxation training on chronic pain in persons with spinal-cord injury. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(3):239-268. This study was designed to compare the effects of self-hypnosis and EMG (muscle tension) based biofeedback relaxation training for 37 adults with spinal-cord injury and chronic pain. The patients were randomly assigned to either a 10 session self-hypnosis condition or to an EMG biofeedback relaxation training condition for pain management. The authors reported that significant reductions in pain intensity were observed in both conditions. However, the authors reported that participants in the hypnosis condition experienced greater decreases in their daily average pain scores in the pre- to post-treatment phases that were maintained at the patients’ 3-month follow-up. Address for reprints: Dr. Mark Jensen, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195-6490, USA. Email Address: mjensen@u.washington.edu.

is similar to the previous review which compared the effects of self-hypnosis training with training using biofeedback for chronic pain. There were 22 patients in this study who suffered from multiple sclerosis (MS) and chronic pain. This study employed a different design in that it used a quasi-experimental trial design with eight patients being assigned to the hypnosis condition and with the remaining 14 participants being randomly assigned to either the hypnosis or biofeedback conditions. The authors reported that most of the participants in both groups made substantial gains in their ability to cope with their chronic pain. They also reported that most of the participants in both conditions continued to use the biofeedback or hypnosis skills after the experiment was over. Also, the authors discuss the advantages of hypnosis over biofeedback treatment seen in their data. Address for reprints: Dr. Mark Jensen, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195-6490. Email Address: mjensen@u.washington.edu.

Oakley, D.A., & Halligan, P.W. (2009). Hypnotic suggestion and cognitive neuroscience. *Trends in the Cognitive Sciences, 13*(6):264-270. This is a brief review article of the growing numbers of studies of hypnotic phenomena in the fields of affective and cognitive neuroscience. The author points out that the “growing acceptance of consciousness as a legitimate field of enquiry” has led to a resurgence of interest in hypnosis research using the methods of the neurosciences. The neurosciences have come a long way in treating consciousness related topics as legitimate avenues of scientific inquiry. Afterall, it was not that long ago when hypnosis and other topics in consciousness were thought of as inherently unscientific. For instance, 1980’s some students were instructed to refrain from using the term “consciousness” itself in writings on the EEG of selective attention. However, there have always been pioneers like Benjamin Libet, Raja Parasuraman, Michael Posner, Karl Pribrahm, David Speigel and others who, over time, have produced high quality studies in the neurosciences addressing topics related to consciousness and hypnosis.

This article reviews the growing body of consciousness research involving the use of FMRI and other neuroimaging techniques to examine hypnosis. The authors point out that the research tends to follow one of two styles in its aims and methods. The first style of study strand that they discuss is made up of studies that examine the affective, cognitive, and neural nature of hypnosis itself. A good example of this type of study would be of studies which examine how hypnotic visual hallucinations occur. The second style of study employs hypnosis to actually examine how other normal and abnormal psychological processes function using specifically targeted hypnotic suggestions. A good example of this would be of emerging research which uses hypnosis to study delusions by creating experimental autobiographical delusions using hypnotic suggestions. This article is recommended as a brief overview of what is occurring in the fields of the neurosciences regarding hypnosis at this time. Address for reprints: Dr. David A. Oakley, Division of Psychology and Language Sciences, University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT, UK. Email Address: d.oakley@ucl.ac.uk.

Pyun, Y.D., & Kim, Y.J. (2009). Experimental production of past-life memories in hypnosis. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 57*(2):269-278. This is an interesting study involving the phenomena of using hypnosis to investigate a person’s possible autobiographical recollections of their previous life histories. The investigators wished to examine how participant’s beliefs about reincarnation and their hypnotic ability might affect their experiences with, so called, past-life regression hypnosis. The participants
were 64 adult males who ranged in age between 21 to 23 years old. They were selected using the Korean version of the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (HGSHS:K) and a scale which measured their beliefs about reincarnation. It should be noted here that Korea is a country where Buddhism and other spiritual traditions have left a cultural imprint that encourages a belief in reincarnation. All the participants received three “past-life regression” hypnotic protocol experiences. The authors reported finding that the participants’ production rate of past life material during hypnosis did appear to be related to a participant’s level of hypnotic ability. However, the participants’ scores on the reincarnation beliefs scale did not appear to be related to their production of “past-life” experiences during hypnosis. The authors also reported that a content analysis of the participant’s narratives demonstrated that their cultural background and religious concepts influenced their past-life memory production. For example they report that animals, as past-life identities, were reported in their study whereas in a Canadian study all past-life identities were human.

This study investigated a highly controversial area of hypnosis. A wide body of evidence and opinion has in general cast a great deal of doubt on the reliability and validity of the methods of, so-called, past life regression hypnosis. Even serious reincarnation researchers such as Ian Stevenson have generally regarded hypnosis as an unreliable tool in the investigation of previous lives. However, there is certainly much to be learned from experimental studies like this one. For instance, this study offers empirical data that suggest that the context of a person’s current life often influences a person’s recall narrative of their “previous life” as has often been suggested by socio-cognitive explanations of past life regression phenomena.

This is important information to keep in mind when working with patients who may sometimes report recall memories of, so-called, previous lives during hypnosis. Patients do report recall memories of “previous lives” when no past life regression methods have been used. It is important to remember that the reliability of these memories is just as subject to the wide variety of memory illusions that we know affect even memories of our current lives. People tend to remember things consistent with the current context of their self-experience. There are also many methods that can be used to encourage confabulation of memories that never occurred with or without hypnosis. Therefore, these types of memories need to be examined critically but with a spiritual respect for the patient who produces them. Address for reprints: Dr. Y.D. Pyun, Pyun Neuropsychiatric Clinic, Seoul, South Korea. Email Address: pyunyd@naver.com.