

Hypnotherapy An Effective Treatment For Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

ScienceDaily (Sep. 28, 2005) — Medics at The University of Manchester have discovered a way to treat Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) using hypnotherapy.

Up to eight million people in Britain suffer from IBS, with symptoms including diarrhea, pain and bloating. The condition can seriously affect sufferers' quality of life and finding treatment can be difficult, leading many doctors to feel they can do little to help.

Research by Peter Whorwell, Professor of Medicine and Gastroenterology in the University's Medical School and Director of the South Manchester Functional Bowel Service, has been researching the use of gut-directed hypnosis for over 20 years. Most recently, two hundred and fifty patients who have suffered from IBS for over two years were given twelve one-hour sessions, during which they were given an explanation of how the gut works and what causes their symptoms.

"IBS is ideal for treatment with hypnosis, as there is no structural damage to the body," explained Professor Whorwell. "During the hypnotherapy, sufferers learn how to influence and gain control of their gut function, and then seem to be able to change the way the brain modulates their gut activity."

With a success-rate of about 80% Professor Whorwell believes that, although labour-intensive, hypnotherapy could be an extremely effective treatment for the condition; and a less expensive alternative to new, costly drugs coming onto the market.

"We've found it to help all the symptoms, whereas some of the drugs available reduce only a few," he said. "As IBS can be a life-long condition it could clearly be a very valuable option for patients; however it is not suitable for everyone and women tend to respond better than men."

Professor Whorwell has founded a dedicated unit at Wythenshawe Hospital which treats patients from all over the UK, as the treatment can only be carried out by a practitioner trained in gut-directed hypnotherapy and is not yet widely available on the NHS.

Former patient Sonia Pinnock said, "I suffered from IBS and was on medication for nearly 20 years, but could get little relief from my symptoms. Since visiting the clinic for 12 hypnotherapy sessions last year however they've disappeared completely ... the difference it's made to my quality of life is indescribable."

Another happy patient Christine Walsh continued, "After my hysterectomy I suffered from IBS for about five years, and it totally ruined my quality of life. I couldn't plan holidays or leisure activities and at work I was often doubled-up in pain. But since having weekly hypnotherapy sessions for three months I've now been free from IBS for five and a half years - the treatment has totally changed my life."

Professor Whorwell concludes, "The term hypnosis was coined by a Manchester surgeon, James Braid, early in the nineteenth century, and it's been in and out of fashion ever since. I'd like to think that our Unit has brought hypnotherapy back to Manchester, and helped improve its legitimacy."