

Hypnotism Gaining A Legitimate Role in Health Care Treatments

Wednesday, April 04, 2007

ROCHESTER, Minn. — Hypnotism has expanded its realm from magic shows to health care. As a potential component of care, hypnotism is gaining legitimacy for a number of conditions, particularly for managing pain, according to the April issue of Mayo Clinic Health Letter.

Exactly how hypnosis works is not clear, but it's generally considered an altered state of consciousness — or trance — in which a person has focused attention and a heightened ability to respond to helpful suggestions.

A trance often can be induced most quickly in people who are in severe pain. A therapist may suggest that the pain will fade or that an area of pain will become numb. In some cases, hypnosis works as well or better than pain-relieving medications.

Hypnosis has been shown to help relieve severe, acute pain associated with childbirth, burns, surgical procedures or dental pain. It can be especially helpful for people who can't take pain medications or for whom medications aren't effective. Hypnosis can also be a component of therapy for other wide-ranging medical conditions, including reducing anxiety before surgery, symptoms of skin inflammation (dermatitis), and asthma symptoms, as well as to aid in smoking cessation.

Hypnosis is generally considered safe, but it only works in patients who are compliant. In other words, hypnosis can't make people act against their own wills. Psychiatrists, psychologists and other health care providers with training in hypnosis can offer medical hypnotism. It's important to verify that the therapist has experience in treating the medical condition, too.