



Hypnotherapy

Welcome to our new section, 'Therapy Focus'. Many members have told us they're unsure about the different allied health modalities so we'll be covering several of these therapies in consecutive editions. We hope this will encourage more understanding and interaction between integrative doctors and these practitioners in the pursuit of better patient care.

What is Hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy is the use of hypnosis in a therapeutic setting. Many people can learn to hypnotise but it is the therapeutic precision of its application which denotes it as hypnotherapy. It is a state of relaxation where the patient achieves a focused ability to respond to suggestion. Hypnosis and hypnotherapy are now receiving professional acknowledgement as more research data is being published.

What conditions do Hypnotherapists treat?

Hypnotherapy is best known for the treatment of smoking. However, research shows the treatment scope is much wider and hypnotherapy has played a significant role in the management of a number of other conditions such as irritable Bowel Syndrome¹, pain reduction², and insomnia³.

Research articles also indicate "that hypnosis is a viable intervention for both acute and chronic pain conditions"⁴. Peebles-Kleiger further outlines the efficacy of hypnotherapeutic interventions in burns, pain, paediatric procedures, surgery, psychiatric presentations (e.g., coma, somatoform disorder, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress), and obstetric situations (e.g., hyperemesis, labour, and delivery⁵).

Other articles have outlined further applications: an intervention in a hospice program⁶, complementary therapies and health promotion⁷, as well as interventions in specific conditions such as cancer⁸ and pain control⁹. It is now being recognised that hypnosis clearly brings a multitude of benefits when used as an adjunct to many health regimes. Articles report significant patient benefits and demonstrate acceptance of hypnosis at a practitioner level.

How do Hypnotherapists treat these conditions?

Hypnotherapists can work directly in order to relieve the symptoms or incorporate other psychotherapeutic paradigms to remove the underlying cause and resolve the issue. Dependent on their training, hypnotherapists integrate techniques from paradigms such as Humanistic / Existential (e.g. Hypnotic Empty Chair), Psychodynamic (e.g. Regression) or Cognitive Behavioural (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).

'Client Centred Hypnotherapy' involves tailoring the treatment specifically to the individual patient. The hypnotherapist who uses this paradigm selects appropriate

techniques in direct response to the client's presentation of their issue.

What about long term preventative care?

This is dependent upon the therapeutic approach. If the issue has a causative event, the treatment would be different to an issue based in lifestyle.

When hypnotherapy deals with the causative event, the outcome is the cessation of the symptoms. This is achieved by:

- identifying the causative factors of a patient's issue
- helping the client recognise alternative methodologies to deal with the causation.
- assisting the client to implement the new behaviours
- fine-tuning the new behaviours to match the patient's lifestyle.

If the client's lifestyle is the issue or the issue has arisen due to upbringing, hypnotherapists can help change behaviours directly or help the client to become more aware of their behaviour and the strategies and attitudes required to either address their issue or manage their condition. This is achieved by:

- helping the client to become aware of their behaviour
- using suggestion or other techniques to help change the client's behaviour
- assist the client to reinforce the changes
- assist the client to make the changes permanent.

When hypnotherapy is used to co-manage a condition

Hypnotherapy is used very successfully to co-manage several conditions. Research has shown significant patient benefits in Irritable Bowel Syndrome, pain reduction and other conditions when hypnosis is used conjunctively with medical interventions. When the condition has a psychological component, hypnotherapy has an ability to directly enhance management structures e.g. boost compliance with exercise or dietary regimes. Additionally, when self hypnosis is also employed, the patient takes a more active role in their own healing.

Is Hypnotherapy proven? Does it work?

The amount of research demonstrating the efficacy of hypnosis is growing rapidly. This position is supported by research in 2000¹⁰ indicating many GP's are undertaking hypnosis training as continuing education. Further substantiation occurred in the 2002 Australian Medical Association (AMA) Position Statement on Complementary Therapies which called upon educational institutions to develop relevant educational and practice standards¹¹.

Leon Cowen

Leon Cowen has been a Clinical Hypnotherapist since 1974 and he established the Academy of Applied Hypnosis in 1983. The Academy achieved the first Vocational Education Training (VET) sector accreditation in 1998 and is an RACGP Accredited Provider for its hypnotherapy training. Currently, Leon is involved in postgraduate research with Macquarie University. His research topic encompasses the skills and proficiencies required to achieve professional competency as a Clinical Hypnotherapist.

The AMA's position and the growing research indicate hypnotherapy is valid in a co-management role.

What qualifications are required?

Currently within Australia there is no statutory training requirement. The best trained hypnotherapists are those who have achieved government accredited training such as Certificate IV or Diploma. As the nomenclature is not restricted, any institution can issue diplomas. It is best to confirm the hypnotherapist has a government accredited qualification rather than a diploma qualification.

Is a referral necessary to see a Hypnotherapist?

No, referral is required but is very helpful if the hypnotherapist is co-managing a patient.

Will patients be covered under Medicare?

Medicare does not cover consultations provided by hypnotherapists unless they are a medical practitioner or are referred by a medical practitioner to a psychologist. Specialist hypnotherapists are usually not medical practitioners or psychologists.

How do I find a Hypnotherapist?

Hypnotherapy associations are a focal point and a national body is currently being formed. However, it is still advisable to refer to association members who hold government accredited qualifications.

References:

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3. Mamtani R, Cimino A. A primer of complementary and alternative medicine and its relevance in the treatment of mental health problems. *Psychiatric Quarterly*. 2002;73(4):367-81.
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7. Mantle F. Complementary therapies and health promotion. *British Journal of Community Nursing*. 2002 Feb;2(7):102-7.
8. Wright S, Courtney U, Crowther D. A quantitative and qualitative pilot study of the perceived benefits of autogenic training for a group of people with cancer. *European Journal of Cancer Care*. 2002 Jun;2(11):22-30.
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10. Pirotta MV, Cohen MM, Kotsirilos V, Farish SJ. Complementary therapies: have they become accepted in general practice? *Medical Journal of Australia*. 2000(172):105-9.
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Here are 4 referral sources

Academy of Applied Hypnosis – Hypnosis Advisory Line

Tel: (02) 9415 6500
Website: <http://www.aah.edu.au>
Email: admin@aah.edu.au

Australian Hypnotherapists' Association

Tel: 1800 067 557
Website: <http://www.ahahypnotherapy.org.au>
Email: not available

Australian Society of Hypnosis

Tel: different numbers in each state available from the website
Website: <http://www.ozhypnosis.com.au>
Email: different emails for each state

Australian-Traditional Medicine Society

Tel: (02) 9809 6800
Website: <http://www.atms.com.au/index.asp>
Email: info@atms.com.au