

Hypnosis shown to reduce symptoms of dementia

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A scientist at the University of Liverpool has found that hypnosis can slow down the impacts of dementia and improve quality of life for those living with the condition.

Forensic psychologist, Dr Simon Duff, investigated the effects of hypnosis on people living with dementia and compared the treatment to mainstream health-care methods. He also looked at how hypnosis compared to a type of group therapy in which participants were encouraged to discuss news and current affairs.

They found that people living with dementia who had received hypnosis therapy showed an improvement in concentration, memory and socialisation compared to the other two treatment groups. Relaxation, motivation and daily living activities also improved with the use of hypnosis.

Dr Duff said: "Over a nine month period of weekly sessions, it became clear that the participants attending the discussion group remained the same throughout. The group who received 'treatment as usual' showed a small decline over the assessment period, yet those having regular hypnosis sessions showed real improvement across all of the areas that we looked at. Participants who are aware of the onset of dementia may become depressed and anxious at their gradual loss of cognitive ability and so hypnosis -which is a tool for relaxation- can really help the mind concentrate on positive activity like socialisation."

Further research will now take place to establish whether hypnosis maintains its effects on dementia as the illness progresses, over longer periods of time.

Dr Dan Nightingale, co-author of the research and leading dementia consultant at the Abacus Clinic in Newark, added: "Evidence to date has shown that we can enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia through the correct use of hypnosis. We have now developed a course for clinicians who wish to incorporate hypnosis into health care plans."