

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HYPNOSIS THE LONGSTANDING USE AND ACCEPTANCE OF HYPNOSIS

Long before our modern anesthetics and counseling we know from their writings that the ancient Greeks, Egyptians as well as the Sumerians and other ancient peoples used what we now call hypnosis for emotional health, pain management and even surgeries. Many of these surgeries and procedures we would recognize today as common **modern procedures such as cataract and brain surgery as well as the setting of broken bones.**

In more modern times, during the 1820s hypnosis gained popularity in Europe as an anesthetic for major surgery. It was during this period that a British surgeon, Doctor James Esdaile (1805-1859) successfully performed thousands of major operations as a surgeon in India using hypnosis as the only anesthetic.

In 1841, the Scottish surgeon Doctor James Braid, famous for his original treatment for clubbed foot, fails after strict examination to find any fraud in the hypnotic demonstrations of hypnotist Charles Lafontaine and adopts hypnotism as a treatment. In the coming years Doctor Braid would greatly expand both the knowledge and use of hypnotism in the medical field.

In 1892 the British Medical Association unanimously endorsed the findings of Sir William Broadbent, Sir William Gairdner, and a Committee of nine doctors “to investigate the nature of the phenomenon of hypnotism”. An excerpt of that report follows:

“The Committee are of opinion that as a therapeutic agent hypnotism is frequently effective in relieving pain, procuring sleep, and alleviating many functional ailments [i.e., 'neurotic' or 'psychogenic' conditions]. As to its permanent efficacy in the treatment of drunkenness, the evidence before the Committee is encouraging, but not conclusive.”

In 1893 the British Medical Association accepted an expanded version of the report complete with references and documented evidences for the effectiveness and safety of hypnosis when practiced by “qualified medical men.”

During World War I and II hypnosis regains popularity as an anesthetic when pharmaceutical supplies are exhausted during wartime and as a way to treat “shell shock” neuroses in combat weary soldiers.

In 1955, after some questions arose about the original 1892/1893 report on hypnosis, the British Medical Association approved clinical hypnosis for psychological and/or medical purposes again, clarifying and expanding the use of hypnosis.

In 1958, both the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association recognized hypnotherapy as a valid medical procedure when used as such.

Also in 1958 Pope Pious the XII stated that hypnosis was a medical and not a spiritual issue and as such was permissible in cases where it provided aid to the suffering.

In 1995, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommended hypnotherapy as a treatment for chronic pain.

In 2000 researchers Kosslyn and Thompson at the Harvard Medical School find hypnosis changes the brain.

In 2006 the National Institutes of Health (NIH) noted research that indicated hypnotism was effective in certain cases when dealing with the pain and other issues resulting from cancer.