

HYPNODONTICS - AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Children of different age group have different levels of fear which leads to lack of cooperation from the patient during dental treatment thereby affecting the prognosis of the treatment on a long-term basis. Various behaviour shaping techniques including pharmacological and non- pharmacological methods have been practiced by dentists to gain maximum patient compliance. Hypnodontics is defined as the art and science of using hypnosis to induce comfort and reduce pain. Uncooperative patients or those who have fear and anxiety during dental treatment can be benefited from hypnotherapy.

KEYWORDS: Pediatric dentistry, Hypnosis, Dental, Behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION:

One of the main reasons that make pediatric patients avoid their visit to the dentist is fear and anxiety. Children of different age groups have different levels of fear which leads to lack of cooperation from the patient during dental treatment and affects the prognosis of the treatment on a long-term basis. Sometimes, patients are not afraid of the pain that dental treatment brings, but of the procedure itself.¹ Various behaviour shaping techniques including pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods have been practiced by dentists to gain maximum patient compliance. Almost all the behaviour shaping techniques aim at keeping the patient relaxed and making them cooperate with the dentist during treatment. Abdeshahi et al suggest that hypnosis enhances control over stress, pain, muscle tension, perception, memories, emotions and feelings.²

HYPNOSIS IN DENTISTRY:

Hypnodontics is defined as the art and science of using hypnosis to dental practice and dental issues. There are techniques which dentists use to relax their patient (including waking hypnosis) and minimize pain, blood loss, during and after procedures.³ Uncooperative patients or those who have fear and anxiety during dental treatment can be benefitted from hypnotherapy. One can easily alleviate the tension, nervousness and unreasonable fear of pain often exhibited by these patients with the help of hypnosis. It provides an effective sedation whilst maintaining patient cooperation, but it also may help patients recovering from dental anxiety and phobia as well as those with a severe gag reflex.⁴ Hypnosis may be used independently or as an additional option with other forms of treatment for best results. During this state, the mind is focused on the suggestions given for comfort and ease. The subconscious mind can much more easily accept these suggestions now that the conscious guarded mind is more relaxed. Also, the subconscious mind, where fears reside, is accessed in this relaxed trance state. A qualified hypnotherapist can facilitate the release of those fears while instilling the patient with new beneficial behaviours and thought patterns which will aid in controlling anxiety.⁵ The effects depend on the level of hypnosis and the hypnotist's suggestions; hypnotists can induce light and deep hypnotic trances. It is important to stress,

however, that, even in the deepest levels of hypnosis, patients can still open their eyes, talk, walk and carry out tasks as normal. Deep hypnosis takes time to achieve and would not be suitable for routine dental practice; however, it is required for analgesia and to modify behaviours. Reaching a light state is easier and quicker to achieve, and is more commonly used in hypnodontia on a day-to-day basis; for example, to relax an anxious patient.⁶ Light hypnosis is sufficient to relax the patient and influence the frightened dental patient whose pain threshold has been lowered by negative emotions, which is said to be effective in up to 80% of the population. When using hypnosis for analgesia, the patient must reach deep hypnosis, which takes time, and have an environment free from distractions and interruptions.⁷

PATIENT MANAGEMENT:

According to the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, hypnotic therapy can be used in patients with tongue thrust, reverse-swallowing, TMJ dysfunction, bruxism.⁸ In every hypnosis session, it is vital that the hypnotist obtains informed consent and reduces patient expectations. The session begins with simple induction exercises and it is made clear to the patient that he/she can emerge from the hypnotic state at any time. At the end of the session, the hypnotic state must be reversed and the patient must be reassured that he can carry on with his day to day routine without any discomfort. A relevant advantage of hypnosis is the capability of reaching full relaxation, deep sedation and, sometimes, amnesia, while maintaining patient co-operation.³ A disadvantage is the environmental needs; even room temperature can have an impact on induction n.² The dangers of hypnosis are negligible when employed by a trained professional within the context of a structured therapeutic programme.⁷ In a qualitative study exploring general dental practitioner attitudes towards hypnosis, the majority stated that they would not use hypnotic techniques due to time constraints, lack of confidence with the techniques and feeling stressed while treating anxious patients.⁹ In a research conducted in 2011,¹⁰ researchers from the university of Rennes used hypnosis to help children overcome the fear of needles used for anaesthesia. In a comparative study among adults and children, 19% of children (and 10% of adults) fear of needles during procedures requiring anaesthesia was the cause of uncooperative behaviour.¹¹ Results of the

study, that compared a group of children who were exposed to hypnosis with a control group, show that hypnosis heightened pain threshold, reducing the pain intensity and increasing the number of patients who did not feel anything.¹¹ The results of many studies state that hypnosis can be useful to dentists especially when treating sensitive subjects, such as patients who have an intense gag reflex,^{12,13} patients with dental phobia, previously traumatized patients, or with children.^{14,15} Suggestibility describes the susceptibility of an individual to hypnosis, and was defined by Peretz et al¹⁶ as the degree to which an individual is inclined toward the uncritical acceptance of ideas and propositions. Intelligent, highly motivated individuals are good hypnotic subjects due to their ability to concentrate. Patients with lower IQ and those who find it difficult to focus, are harder to hypnotise. Individuals with psychopathologies are more prone to the dissociative effects of hypnosis, it may complicate or worsen their mental state. Other contraindications include drugs/alcohol and uncooperative or sceptical patients.

CONCLUSION:

Hypnosis has multiple uses in dentistry, ranging from mild relaxation of the anxious patient to total analgesia for surgery. With proper knowledge, training and patient selection, it can be a very vital tool to manage children and even anxious adults in the dental operator therefore making dental treatment successful in a very simple yet convenient way.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

There are no conflicts of interest.

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