

Psyching out the pain and nausea

CANCER affects millions of people throughout the world, whether they are currently being treated or in remission.

It is important that alternative, natural methods are explored in order to help people alleviate the symptoms of this disease – the most common being pain and nausea.

One of methods is hypnotherapy, which has been proven to help cancer patients reduce the severity of their cancer symptoms including pain and nausea.

A clinical trial tested the effectiveness of hypnosis and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) on treating pain and nausea in cancer patients.

The researchers evaluated whether hypnosis or CBT were effective in treating the symptoms of 67 cancer patients.

The patients that participated in the clinical trial were recipients of a bone marrow transplant (*Syrjala, Cummings, & Donaldson, 1992*).

A bone marrow transplant is needed when a patient's bone marrow has been destroyed or is not functioning properly.

Cancers that often require bone marrow transplants include leukaemia, lymphoma, and multiple myeloma.

A transplant occurs when bone marrow is taken from a healthy individual and implanted into the cancer patient.

This process can bring about many side effects including pain and nausea (*Medline Plus*).

The clinical trial randomly divided the participants into four groups. Group one received hypnosis while group two received CBT.

Groups three and four served as control groups where group three had access to a therapist and group four received normal treatment.

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BY **AJIT LUDHER**



All patients participated in psychological and physical testing.

Groups one, two, and three received their respective forms of therapy twice before their transplant operation. While in the hospital for their transplant, they also received 15 hypnosis sessions.

At the end of the trial, 45 patients were still involved in the study.

Results of the trial showed that hypnosis was effective at reducing pain experienced by bone marrow transplant patients.

There was no difference between the hypnosis and the CBT groups in relation to reducing nausea. CBT was found to be ineffective at reducing pain with the participants (*Syrjala et al., 1992*).

This trial indicates that hypnosis can be effective in reducing pain and helping patients lead a quality life.

More research is being done to find out all the multi-potential benefits of hypnosis, which is a natural, safe and powerful form of treatment.

Ajit Ludher is a specialist in advanced professional hypnotherapy, a counselling psychotherapist for trauma/crisis, human resources trainer & motivator and a cognitive behavioural therapist. Readers can reach him at lifestyle.ajitludher@thesundaily.com.

