

OPINION

Why Optometric Hypnosis?

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Any profession should utilize every available "tool" for the betterment of the service it renders. When this "tool" serves a dual purpose of being a direct benefit to the patient as well as in creating a more controlled and relaxed atmosphere for the benefit of both the patient and the practitioner, this technique should be part of the armamentarium of every optometrist.

Why has hypnosis been ignored, neglected and misinterpreted by a vast majority of all the professions in the health-care field? Ignorance! Failure to understand the basic underlying psychological principles of this natural ability possessed by every human mind or, more accurately, by every living creature. In recent times more and more members of the medical, dental and related professions are being educated and trained in the principles and practical applications of hypnosis. You, as part of the health team, must keep abreast of these developments if you are to maintain your ever-increasing status in the visual care field. This is not to be interpreted as being an encroachment on the services of the medical practitioner. Hypnosis can and is being used in many ways exclusively in the optometric field, providing a service to the patient, directly or indirectly, which cannot be provided in any other way but through the use and understanding of the principles of hypnosis.

The purpose of this article is not to teach you hypnosis. It is to try to show you that hypnosis does have a practical and useful place in an optometric practice and perhaps help to motivate you to further study.

Perhaps the most basic and most

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rewarding use to the optometrist is the increased control of the responses and reactions of the patient. Once the basic principles of hypnosis are understood, there are innumerable applications with almost every patient. A few examples will give you a better insight of this approach. We all have, on occasion, had the problem of a particularly sensitive patient being unable to maintain a steady fixation during an ophthalmoscopic examination, and other times when a high intensity is required. Through a very simple-trained procedure, not only is any discomfort to the patient eliminated but because of a more stable and prolonged fixation and less resistance from the patient, a more thorough and accurate examination of the fundus can be made. A similar technique can be used with youngsters who tend to move and fidget. By creating a more controlled and relaxed situation, the examination procedure is much more pleasant for the patient and for the examiner. It is surprising how many adult patients suffer through an examination because of tension or nervousness. What a joy it is to be able to work relaxed and what a tremendous impression is created on the patient. This aspect of hypnosis alone can be utilized in many different ways and in itself would prove highly beneficial to an optometric practice.

In the opinion of this writer, in contact lens fitting, hypnotic techniques are practically indispensable. I use this in one form or another with almost every contact lens patient, having developed a training program which I feel is superior to most of those being used at the present time. However, many of you are possibly using similar methods without being aware of their relationship to hypnosis. A better understanding of

these methods would enable you to make much better use of this phenomenon.

In special cases, hypnosis has been the only solution to the problem. The following will serve to illustrate such a situation. A young executive type lady of 34 had on two previous occasions tried to be fitted with contact lenses. Her motivation was more than adequate as she desperately wanted to be without glasses due to business reasons. However, on both occasions, the doctor was unable to insert the lenses even though, as she put it, "The second time two of them tried to hold me down and put in the lenses." Using a relatively simple hypnotic approach, the lenses were inserted in a matter of minutes without the slightest fear or discomfort on the part of the patient and the training and wearing schedule progressed normally thereafter. One case of excessive and continual lacrimation with contact lenses was solved after only one session as well as a severe case of photophobia.

I do not wish to give the impression that hypnosis is a panacea for, in many cases, this approach is useless but, where applicable, the somewhat astonishing results at times almost seem to border on the occult, only of course, to those unfamiliar with the basis on which hypnosis is founded.

Many more actual cases could be presented to prove the usefulness and practicability of the hypnotic approach in optometric practice, for in my practice the use of some form of hypnosis has become almost a routine procedure. At present experiments are being conducted in other aspects of visual problems. The most rewarding has been the reduction and/or prevention of myopia in

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One of the more colorful displays is a collection of postage stamps from around the world depicting items of visual or optical significance. A number of countries have issued stamps on blindness prevention, stamps commemorating Ophthalmological Congresses and still others depicting famous scientists such as Pavlov, Von Graefe, Helmholtz and Galileo. Recently West Germany has issued several stamps with illustrations of instruments found in the Zeiss museum in Jena. While some stamps include illustrations of people wearing various styles of spectacles, it is interesting to note that very few subjects wear glasses in portrait stamps. Perhaps it has been a traditional courtesy not to display any physical weakness of a prominent figure.

Though the museum of Visual Science and Optometry is still in its infancy, much progress has been made toward developing this as a public resource. The materials in the museum have been catalogued in accordance with standard museum practice. A card index has been completed to aid in locating any particular artifact. Co-ordination with other museums is being developed through the Ontario Museum Association. Efforts have been directed toward the creation of a system that will benefit all levels of interest: the professional optometrist, the researcher, the museum curator or the Sunday historian. Exhibits are geared not only toward fulfilling the needs of the academic community but also toward accommodating a

growing public awareness of the necessity to preserve history. Indeed, it would appear that interest is spreading for the museum has received articles from people throughout Canada. All of these contributions are greatly appreciated and it is hoped that suggestions and inquiries will follow. It is the aim of the museum to benefit the public at large as well as those with a closer professional interest.

Any person who has historical material pertaining to Optometry or Visual Science is asked to contact the Museum. While any early materials are useful, there is a particular need for early optical instruments, telescopes, microscopes as well as archival material dealing with Optometry's early history. Contact:

Prof. E.J. Fisher, Curator, Museum of Visual Science and Optometry, c/o School of Optometry, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ont. N2L 3G1.

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school children. Much more research needs to be done and it is hoped that this article has created enough interest so that you will want to learn more about the possible uses of hypnosis in optometry.

How to start? Some excellent literature is available. Local societies often conduct courses. Possibly a lay hypnotist can provide a basic knowledge. There are a variety of courses conducted in the United States. Unfortunately very little of what is available is optometrically oriented but any knowledge can be useful. As the basic principles of hypnosis are assimilated and better understood, these can more and more readily be adapted to optometric use. As more optometrists show an interest in this field, it is hoped a course in optometric hypnosis can be established.

In the meantime, at least, keep an open mind – for the benefit of yourself and your patient.

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