

# Dementia / Alzheimer's Disease & Hypnotherapy Research Studies

In 2007, a study done by researchers in two care homes in the United Kingdom found that dementia patients who received regular weekly hypnosis sessions over a 9-month period showed improvements in all 7 aspects of their “quality of life”: concentration, relaxation, motivation, activities of daily living, immediate memory, memory of significant events, and socialization. In fact, some of those improvements were maintained for a period of time after the study – such as for 21 months or more from the start date of the study.<sup>[1.1.1](#)</sup>

## 1.1. Alternative Approaches to Supporting Individuals with Dementia: Enhancing Quality of Life Through Hypnosis

**Results:** This pilot study explored the use of hypnosis to influence 7 aspects of quality of life in individuals with dementia: concentration, relaxation, motivation, activities of daily living, immediate memory, memory of significant events, and socialization. The results indicate that hypnosis has a beneficial impact on quality of life on both a short-term and long-term basis. Unlike the other study participants, the participants in the hypnosis group showed improvement in all 7 items – some of which were maintained over a period of time, such as 21 months or more.

The study authors hypothesize that perhaps an individual with dementia is aware of his or her gradual loss of abilities. That awareness leads to increased levels of anxiety and depression – which are known to involve active cognitive processing. Because the individual's limited cognitive resources are being used up by anxiety and depression, even greater loss of memory, motivation and ability takes place. The authors further hypothesize that hypnosis may decrease an individual with dementia's anxiety and depression (through positive suggestion and relaxation), which – in turn – may free up otherwise engaged resources so they are available for the individual to use to successfully accomplish cognitive tasks.

**Notes:** Eighteen participants were recruited from 2 care homes and were randomly allocated into 1 of 3 groups, the hypnosis group (HG), the discussion group (DG), and the treatment-as-usual group (TG). The HG received weekly individual sessions of hypnosis carried out in their single-occupancy bedrooms at their residential or nursing home. Each session lasted approximately 1 hour. Thus, over the 9-month period each HG participant received a total of 36 hours of hypnosis in 36 sessions. Prior to the first hypnosis session, each participant received 1-hour consultation and interview to customize the terminology used during the hypnosis sessions. This ensured that the language used was familiar and personalized for each participant and to ensure comprehension of suggestions that were to be used. Participants were also introduced to the process of progressive muscle relaxation. Participants were induced into hypnosis in 3 phases: (i) eye closure, (ii) progressive muscle relaxation, starting at the scalp and moving progressively down toward the feet, and (iii) a permissive induction. Permissive inductions “ask” each participant to allow oneself to become more relaxed. After deepening, the HG participants were given direct suggestions relating to the 7 items described earlier, along with additional “CRC” suggestions (Calmness, Relaxation, and Confidence). Examples of the statements are provided below.

At the end of this session, and between now and the next time I see you, you will feel more relaxed and at ease, more motivated to do the things you want to do.

You will have clarity of thought; you will be able to concentrate for longer periods of time.

You will have fewer concerns and less feelings of anxiousness.

Spending time with others will have meaning and you will want to spend time chatting with others.

For each of the 7 items, all participants were rated on a 7-point scale, assessed once at the start of the study period and then at weekly intervals.

Alzheimer's Care Today 2007; 8(4):321-331

By: Simon Duff, Ph.D., is a chartered forensic psychologist and a trained hypnotherapist, working at the Division of Clinical Psychology, University of Liverpool, and the Mersey Forensic Psychology Service, Liverpool, United Kingdom. Daniel Nightingale, Ph.D., was first trained in social work, then as a registered nurse in learning disabilities before completing a doctorate in both learning disabilities and transitional shock. He is a trained hypnotherapist and head of dementia services at Southern Cross Healthcare, The Alton Centre, Northampton, United Kingdom.

<http://dementiatherapyspecialists.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Alzheimers-Care-Today-article.pdf>