
ORIGINS OF THE SECTION OF HYPNOSIS AND PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE – PART 2

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the various movements in the UK, Europe and in the United States which precipitated the formation of the Hypnosis Section at the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM). Close attention is given to meetings at the RSM in preparation for the inaugural Section meeting in June 1978.

Key words: Royal Society of Medicine, Section of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine

The Section of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine, originally known as the Section of Medical and Dental Hypnosis, has organized conferences and meetings at the RSM since the summer of 1978. This paper outlines the developments of the sister societies – in the UK, Europe and the United States – and describes some of the reasons for the formation of a section devoted to medical and dental hypnosis.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HYPNOSIS SOCIETIES 1950–1978

The first reputable international organization which focused on the theories and practices of hypnosis within the context of medical and dental practice was, what is now known as, the International Society of Hypnosis (ISH) – a name which has undergone many changes – which traced its roots back to the first International Congress of Experimental and Therapeutic Hypnotism. This was held in Paris in August 1889. After this event in 1889, there were four subsequent congresses; and in 1973, congresses were arranged every three years. The four congresses after 1889 were held in Paris (1900 and 1965), Kyoto (1967), and Mainz (1970). From 1973, congresses of the International Society of Hypnosis have been held, more or less, every three years in a number of cities around the world – specifically, Uppsala (1973), Philadelphia (1976), Melbourne (1979), Glasgow (1982), Toronto (1985), Leiden (1988), Jerusalem (1992), Melbourne (1994), San Diego (1997), Munich (2000), Singapore (2004), Acapulco (2006), Rome (2009), Bremen (2012), Paris (2015) and Montreal (2018) (The International Society of Hypnosis, n.d.).

However, although hypnosis was paid a great deal of attention in the late nineteenth century, it was not until 1959 that an international society was formed – the International Society of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (ISCEH). The founding president of the society was the Canadian physician Bernard Raginsky who worked closely alongside John Watkins, who was initially honorary secretary. This society largely took its name from the Society of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (SCEH) which had previously been founded in the United States

in 1949 (The International Society of Hypnosis, n.d.). The first congress by the International Society was held in 1965; and, at this event, specialists in the field paid tribute to France's long history of interest in hypnosis research and clinical practice. This event might have helped to lay the foundations of societies in the United Kingdom. The title of this event, in 1965, was the International Congress for Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine, and this was the first congress of the newly formed ISCEH. It is interesting that the hypnosis section at the RSM changed its name from the Section of Medical and Dental Hypnosis to the Section of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine in July 1988, under the presidency of David Pederson (Hunting, 2002). This reflected the view at the time that hypnosis was important not only in psychological medicine – particularly in the treatment of psychosomatic 'symptoms' – but also as a discipline in clinical psychology and research.

In 1973, the International Society went through a number of constitutional changes at the congress in Uppsala and the name was changed to the International Society of Hypnosis (ISH). Presenters at this important event included Ernest Hilgard, Erika Fromm, Herbert Spiegel, John Hartland, Martin Orne and Ainsley Meares. At this time, Ernest Hilgard became the first president and the *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* was recognized as the official journal for the society. Since then, this journal is generally recognized as being the leading journal on hypnosis from both a clinical and theoretical perspective.

EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

In 1976, two years before the hypnosis section was set up at the Royal Society of Medicine, Basil Finer, Per-Olof Wikström, Dietrich Langen, Vladimir Gheorghiu, Heinrich Wallnöfer, Marjan Pajntar and a number of others, postulated the idea of setting up a European subsection of the ISH; and, shortly after, the European Section of the International Society of Hypnosis (ES-ISH) was formed. In 1978, the European Society of Hypnosis was set up, initially as a group of seven national societies, and the first European Congress, entitled 'Hypnosis in Psychotherapy and Psychosomatic Medicine', was organized in Malmö in 1978 (European Society of Hypnosis, n.d.).

UK DEVELOPMENTS

In the UK, medics and dentists were becoming more and more interested in the efficacy of hypnosis in clinical practice. In 1949, Dr Gordon Ambrose, Dr Van Pelt and colleagues founded the British Society of Medical Hypnotists and published the *British Journal of Medical Hypnotism*. Three years later, in 1952, eminent dentists, including Eric Wookey and Harry Radin, formed the British Society of Dental Hypnosis; and in 1955, doctors joined forces and together they formed a new society known as the Dental and Medical Society for the Study of Hypnosis. Two years earlier, the Psychological Medicine Group Committee of the British Medical Association put together a working group which analysed the appropriate uses of hypnosis in clinical practice. This group recommended that hypnosis be taught during medical and dental training at undergraduate level, and should also be taught at a postgraduate level. In the final report, which was published in 1955, the leading experts in the field of psychological medicine – including, Dr EA Bennet, Dr S Noy Scott and Professor Alexander Kennedy and Professor T Ferguson Rodger – quite rightly advised that hypnosis should not be used for entertainment

purposes and recommended that the techniques and its efficacy should be investigated with scientific rigour. Importantly, the report said:

The subcommittee is satisfied that after consideration of the available evidence that hypnosis is of value and may be the treatment of choice in some cases of so-called psychosomatic disorder and psychoneurosis. It may also be of value for revealing unrecognized motives and conflicts in such conditions.

(BMA Working Party, 1955, p.3)

They also recommended that hypnosis training be offered to all medical students focusing on psychological medicine at postgraduate level. In addition, they also mentioned the possibility of teaching hypnosis to anaesthetists and obstetricians. New changes to the infrastructure of the Dental and Medical Society for the Study of Hypnosis, established in 1955 (Wookey, 1955), including the amalgamation of Gordon Ambrose's group, precipitated the formation of the Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis, established in 1961, under the presidency of Dr John Hartland. And, in 1968, following a rewriting and appraisal of the constitution, the British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis (BSMDH) was founded. This society, which had branches all over the UK, taught hypnosis at postgraduate level, and began to train health professionals. They also began an accreditation scheme which is still used today by the British Society of Clinical and Academic Hypnosis (BSCAH) in a modified form. With branches all over the British Isles, BSMDH also liaised closely with physicians and dental surgeons in the USA as well as in Europe. In 1969, the DHSS and Postgraduate Medical Federation provided some students with grants for studying hypnosis. Further links were established in 1975, when the former president of the BPS, Professor Max Hamilton, became the patron of the Metropolitan Branch; in addition, Professor Linford Rees, who was president of the newly formed Royal College of Psychiatrists also joined as a member in 1976. In the 1970s, a Northern Branch, North Wales Branch and a West of England Branch were introduced while the Metropolitan Branch grew larger, thanks to the hard work of Mrs Mary Samuels and Dr Lucy Hamson. The Scottish Branch of BSMDH was inaugurated in February 1959, and the first chairman was Dr David Fisher. Since then, a series of forward-looking chairmen followed including Dr James Gall, Dr George Fairfull Smith and Dr James Gilmour. Dr James Gall, for example, set up a hypnosis unit at the Dental Hospital, Glasgow. And, in 1975, Dr Alan W Robertson was involved in linking a hypnosis clinic with the Department of Otolaryngology at the Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow. In addition, a Midlands Branch was set up by Dr John Hartland and renowned dentist, Stanley Tinkler, while the North West of England Branch also ran regular workshops and training largely led by anaesthetist, Dr David Scott. Further trainings and workshops were held at the Brompton Chest Hospital and organized by psychiatrists, Dr Peter Fenwick, Dr Peter Mellett and Dr E Lidell, and chest physician, Dr Gilbert Maher-Loughton.

The British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis only accepted doctors and dentists as members. And, up until 1977, in the UK, there was no society which focused on hypnosis for psychologists. However, in 1977, a year before the hypnosis section was set up, Dr HB (Tony) Gibson, Dr Brian Fellows, Professor Gwynne Jones (former president of the British Psychological Society), Dr Vernon Gregg, and others set up a small group of psychologists to form a separate society called the British Society of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis (BSECH). This

society was originally set up for psychologists who had a particular interest in hypnosis – both in the clinical and experimental domains. However, membership was also open to doctors and dentists. In fact, there were a number of medics and dentists who were instrumental in setting up this society – for example, Dr David Waxman, who was a doctor with a specialist interest in psychiatry; Dr Gordon Ambrose, consultant psychiatrist; Dr Tony Basker, GP; Dr Eric Wookey, dentist; and chest physician Dr Gilbert Maher-Loughnan. These clinicians were interested in gaining empirical support for the use of hypnosis, as well as providing information from an experimental setting. The psychologists at the first meeting were Dr Tony Gibson (clinical psychologist and senior research fellow at the Hatfield Polytechnic, now known as the University of Hertfordshire), Dr Brian Fellows (Portsmouth University), Dr Vernon Greg (Birkbeck) and Dr Eileen Smith (clinical psychologist who, at the time, worked at the Maida Vale Hospital for Nervous Diseases) (Heap, 2020). There were a number of other important psychologists and clinicians who were present during the initial formation of the society including Dr Frank Vingoe, Dr Mike Heap and Dr Peter Naish. Importantly, at the inaugural meeting, Dr Mike Heap and others, when discussing the name of the society, deliberately put the name 'Experimental' before the word 'Clinical' – presumably, they wanted to make it clear that experimental hypnosis was paramount in the scope of the society.

Interestingly, Tony Gibson, who had turned to psychology rather late in life, was influential in setting up this new society. Gibson was Hans Eysenck's research assistant at the Institute of Psychiatry from 1958 to 1961. Fairly early in his career, he had an interest in hypnosis and suggestibility (Heap, 2001), and in the years immediately before the setting up of BSECH and the Section of Hypnosis at the Royal Society of Medicine, he published a range of articles on a number of topics including an examination on the relationship between personality types and hypnotic susceptibility (Gibson and Curran 1974) and a critique of the Stanford Hypnotisability Scale (Curran and Gibson, 1974). He also published a book on the nature and clinical use of hypnosis (Gibson, 1977).

It was evident from discussions that took place at the time, that there was a number of doctors and dentists who not only supported the setting up of this new society, but also actively encouraged the psychologists to do so: it was important for clinical practice to gain further understanding of hypnosis as a phenomenon and to develop empirical data and an evidence base to support its efficacy in clinical practice (Heap, 2020). However, not all of the clinicians were in support of psychologists. Indeed, there were some medics and dentists who felt that psychologists were not adequately trained to use this tool. Leslie Walker, an eminent psychologist with a special interest in hypnosis, spanning several decades, felt compelled to write a letter to Bernard Oliver, editor of the July 1979 edition of the *Proceedings of the British Society of Medical & Dental Hypnosis*. David Waxman, who was at the time employed at Middlesex Hospital, had implied that practising psychologists be put into the same category as 'lay hypnotists', and Walker, quite rightly, pointed out the fact that there should be a clear distinction between lay hypnotists and fully qualified psychologists (Walker, 1979). Prejudices, however, continued well into the 1990s. However, thankfully, there were a huge number of supporters within the medical and dental communities to warrant the setting up of this new society, and both societies arranged joint workshops, events and trainings. Indeed, annual conferences were organized from 1982 onwards. In the decades to follow, research in experimental hypnosis flourished and to some extent left many of the clinicians behind in their understanding of hypnosis and the treatment of psychological conditions. The pilot issue of

the journal of this society, written in the same year as the 25th anniversary of BSMDH, edited by Brian Fellows, was entitled *Hypnosis: Bulletin of the British Society of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis* which was later renamed the *British Journal of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis*. Since then, the title of this journal has gone through two further changes of name – first, *Contemporary Hypnosis* (1991) and then, *Contemporary Hypnosis and Integrative Therapy* (2011). This publication is the official journal of the British Society of Clinical and Academic Hypnosis (BSCAH) and the European Society of Hypnosis (ESH). For many years, this journal was a leading European publication for formal published research, case histories and evidence-based medicine relating to hypnosis.

It is clear that there had been a significant amount of research, both in the clinical and experimental domains, leading up to the formation of the RSM Section of Hypnosis. David Waxman, in addition to his work for BSMDH and the setting up of a new section, had also been active in attempting to gain political sympathy for an amendment to the Hypnotism Act (1952): he asked for additional control of the nature of stage hypnosis acts and to put restraints on lay hypnotherapists. Dr Gibson, at the time, wrote a letter to the British Psychological Society warning them that possible changes to the law may result in psychologists having to limit their therapeutic services. Brian Fellows, in his introduction to the pilot journal, concluded that psychologists should be vigilant about this move and concluded that, 'There [was] nothing specifically medical about hypnosis' (Fellows, 1977, p1). Around this time, two important pieces of literature coincided with the beginnings of the BSECH and the Section of Hypnosis – namely Hilgard and Hilgard's (1975) *Hypnosis in the Relief of Pain*, Sheehan and Perry's (1976) *Methodologies of Hypnosis*, as well as the book by Tony Gibson (1977) *Hypnosis: Its Nature and Therapeutic Uses*.

In the preliminary meeting at the Royal Society of Medicine, which convened in order to set up the new section, it was noted in the minutes that, in order to set up a new section, the council would require the support of the Metropolitan Branch of BSMDH of which David Waxman, at the time, was President. The reason for this was that members of the RSM were concerned that lay hypnotists would be allowed to join the section; and, indeed, members of the Metropolitan Branch, as well as existing RSM fellows, convinced the council that this would not be the case. In fact, in the council minutes, council members devised a strict set of criteria for membership (Council minutes, 1977). The setting up of this new society, together with all the publications in experimental hypnosis, indicate that there was a great deal of interest in hypnosis in medicine, but also in clinical psychology and experimental research. There was still work to be done, however, in getting hypnosis more accepted in medicine and dentistry and, partly, its lack of success was due to the fact that there was insufficient empirical evidence to support its efficacy. Psychologists interested in hypnosis possibly represented a solution to this problem. It seems strange that psychologists who, in the present day, play an integral part in section meetings at the RSM were not included at the time; indeed, it was not until the mid-1980s that they were accepted as members at the Royal Society of Medicine. At the time, out of the 32 medical schools and 18 dental schools in Britain, only 2 from each provided some official training in hypnosis to undergraduates (Scott, 1978), and this situation has only worsened today.

BEGINNINGS OF THE SECTION OF HYPNOSIS

Less than a year before this new society was formed, on 3 October 1977, at 6:15pm, a meeting was held at the Royal Society of Medicine to discuss the arrangements for the formation of a new section – the Section of Medical and Dental Hypnosis. This name was changed years later to the Section of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine. In April of that year, when the formal proposal had originally been made, there was some disagreement amongst the fellows of the RSM (Hunting, 2002). BSMDH had wholeheartedly supported this move; however, some members of the RSM council feared that the society would encourage lay practitioners to join (Council Minutes, 1977). A subcommittee was thus appointed to make sure that only health professionals were allowed membership and, after careful consideration, the council agreed that this new section could be formed. At this first meeting, the following were present: Dr FA Thomson, Dr Graham Bennette, Dr David Waxman, Dr Lucy Hanson, Dr Basil Morcas, Mr Bernard Oliver and Mrs Mary Samuels. At the meeting, they discussed how to let members of BSMDH know about the new section and to ask them to become fellows of the RSM. They also pointed out that it was important to let existing fellows know that they could become founder fellows of the section. And the Metropolitan Branch – which is now known as the London Branch – which had meetings at the time at the RSM, not only supported this new section but also encouraged 69 of its members, who were already fellows of the RSM, to be founder fellows of the section (Hunting, 2002). Further encouragement about setting up this section was given by Sir Desmond Pond, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists at the time, and by Professor Gwynne Jones who was a former president of the British Psychological Society. Many more doctors and dentists were newly elected as fellows of the RSM and they all became founder fellows of the Section – a total of 164. In addition, they compiled a list of members who would become members of council. The objectives of the section were to, 'extend the knowledge of the hypnotic state, to investigate further its neurophysiology and to promote interest in its clinical use' (Council Minutes, 1977, p.3).

On 22 June 1978, the inaugural meeting of the section took place. The acting president of the RSM, Sir Gordon Wolstenholme, and David Waxman, president of the section, welcomed fellows, members and guests to the meeting. David Waxman, who was then working at the Department of Psychological Medicine at the Middlesex Hospital, pointed out that the aim of the section was to investigate hypnosis as a phenomenon using a scientific and empirical basis for research, and to develop its practical use in clinical practice. At the time, Dr Gilbert Maher-Loughnan was the president-elect; there were two vice-presidents, John Elliott and Bernard Oliver; a library representative, David Pedersen; an editorial representative, Dennis Zimmerman; and two honorary secretaries, R.B. Smith and Pauline Nicolaou. A vote was taken on a show of hands, and those nominated were elected unanimously. The acting president welcomed Professor Linford Rees, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, to the meeting. He then called on Dr David Waxman to give the presidential address entitled 'Wounds give no pain'. There were 164 founder fellows of the section. These included a range of eminent physicians, dentists and other health professionals. Amongst them were: Dr GJ Ambrose, Dr MA Basker, Dr GA Burnett, Mr EM Fenton, Dr DK Fisher, Dr AER Gibbs, Mr GS Graham, Dr T Kraft, Dr S Lazarus, Dr G Maher-Loughnan, Dr AET Mathieson, Dr PG Mellett, Dr BA Morcas, Mr BA Oliver, Professor I Oswald, Dr DL Pedersen, Dr P Sarin, Dr MR Trimble, Dr D Waxman and Dr D Zimmerman (Council Minutes, 1978). In the first year of David Waxman's

presidentship, meetings investigated some of the problems in dealing with pain in dentistry; they also explored hypnosis and suggestibility, hypnosis and the paranormal, and arranged the training of psychotherapists in hypnosis. Members of the Section of Odontology, Section of Anaesthetics, Section of Surgery, Section of Orthopaedics were also invited so as to encourage specialist consultants in other fields to embrace hypnosis as a useful and practical tool.

THE FORMATION OF BSECH

It is interesting that the meeting which discussed the formation of the section, in 1977, took place in the same year as BSECH was formed. The decision to set up a sister society which included psychologists had a profound effect on the way hypnosis was viewed in medical and dental practice. Indeed, psychologists investigated hypnosis still further: they were able to provide a scientific understanding of hypnosis by measuring its effectiveness more rigorously using statistical data; they were able to provide evidence for brain function using neuroimaging; they began to define hypnosis comparing it to the waking state; they continued to develop scientific measures to assess hypnotic suggestibility; they debated whether hypnosis was a state or an altered state of consciousness; they investigated the concepts of both consciousness and unconsciousness and considered its implication with regard to hypnosis; they suggested cognitive-behavioural techniques which could be used *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Hypnosis also continued to be used in forensic psychology and in sports psychology. Psychologists expanded on the use of indirect suggestion and spoke of its benefits. It is perhaps for this reason that medics, certainly in the 1970s, who tended to use more authoritarian approaches in their practice, began to employ patient-generated imagery and process suggestions in their work.

THE FIRST TERM OF THE SECTION

With some exceptions, the president of the section, took on the role for a two-year period. David Waxman began his presidentship with a lecture entitled 'Wounds give no pain' which provided the audience with an insight into the potential use of hypnosis in clinical practice. In the introduction to his inaugural lecture, Waxman placed hypnosis in a historical context. It is important here that he focused immediately on the link between the mind and the body, a theme which not only ran through the entire lecture, in various shapes and forms, but would become a recurring theme not only in the section but also in the sister societies for years to come. For instance, he mentioned Galen's hypothesis that there was some kind of ethereal fluid which bridged the gap between the mind and the body (see Hankinson, 2006). This concept, akin to the modern-day principles of psychoneuroimmunology, he returned to throughout the lecture. Indeed, he related these principles to Freud and Breuer's theory that unconscious hostilities were at the source of psychosomatic pain (Freud and Breuer, 1975). Waxman expanded on this theory by focusing on the link between the development of breast cancer and psychological distress; as he put it, 'the mind can have an effect on immune response' (Waxman, 1979, p.169). Indeed, this theory seems to fall in line with the concept of Sacher and colleagues that hypnosis can alter the 'hypersensitivity' of the subject (Sacher et al., 1965).

Waxman continued to elaborate on the range of potential uses for hypnosis in clinical practice. For example, in reference to John Elliotson, he pointed out that, as far back as the 1840s, the eminent physician reported a range of surgical cases in which hypnosis eliminated

pain (Elliotson, 1843 [1977]) and published an article in which he, reportedly, 'cured' cancer using a form of mesmerism (Elliotson, 1848). In addition, in reference to Janet's (1925) use of hypnosis, he mentioned that he believed that it was some form of dissociation. Again, this is another example of Waxman predicting later themes of the section: Janet's dissociation theory links very nicely with some later debates around hypnosis being an 'altered state of awareness' (Kirsch and Lynn, 1998); and, moreover, if hypnosis were some form of dissociation mechanism, perhaps this helps us to understand the link between hypnosis, fight or flight and the concept that war veterans and sufferers of PTSD seem to have an accentuated involvement in right brain activity (Spiegel, 1988).

Importantly, although hypnosis in the first part of the twentieth century was mainly employed by lay therapists and stage performers – particularly as entertainment for the troops during the Second World War (Walters, 1958) – it had been used appropriately and creatively by the behaviourists in the 1950s. Waxman mentioned its use in order to effect the reciprocal inhibition of anxiety, although it is interesting that he left out the fact that hypnosis was relaxing in itself and that, by pairing hypnosis with phobic anxiety systematically, one could reduce or eliminate phobias (Wolpe, 1958). However, he did point out that psychodynamic and behavioural techniques could be used in conjunction with hypnosis in order to help resolve a range of psychological problems. Most importantly, Waxman expanded on the potential of hypnosis as an aid to anaesthesia for pre- and post-operative use as well during a surgical procedure. In short, Waxman expanded on the vast potential uses of hypnosis in medicine.

It is interesting that, during Waxman's two years as president, there was a lecture on the training of psychotherapists and this paper looked at the integration of psychodynamically-orientated psychotherapy in clinical practice. It also focused on how psychotherapy could be utilized in order to reduce medically unexplained symptoms. Interestingly, there seems to have been an interest in psychotherapy integration at the time – founders of the BSECH also included information on the National Society of Psychotherapists in the pilot issue of their journal, the *Bulletin of the British Society of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis* (December 1977) but this interest at the RSM has decreased over the decades. Other topics during this first series of meetings (1978–1979) included pain problems in dentistry, hypnosis and suggestibility, as well as a controversial paper on hypnosis and paranormal phenomena. The section, together with BSMDH and BSECH, were instrumental in organizing the Ninth International Congress of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine in Glasgow which occurred in August 1982. Indeed, David Waxman and others – Mr Duncan Cameron, Dr JA Crocket, Mr George Fairfull-Smith, Dr Tony Basker and Professor MR Bond – were among members of the various organizing committees which set up this congress.

Since 1978, the section has hosted a number of important meetings, seminars, trainings and workshops with eminent speakers from all over the UK particularly, as well as some speakers from abroad. Along with the various sister societies, the section has provided a platform by which both clinicians and scientists have presented and discussed theories and practices relating to hypnosis. At present, the section runs several meetings a year, as well as an essay prize – the events are well attended and they provide delegates with ample time to discuss and deliberate theoretical applications of hypnosis both in clinical practice and in the experimental setting. Each year, in December, the section organizes a meeting in honour of Dr

David Waxman: traditionally, the David Waxman Memorial Lecture is a popular event, usually attended by members of David's family.

This paper has outlined the development of the various sister societies running up to the formation of the Section of Medical and Dental Hypnosis in 1978. The author hopes that the section will continue to flourish and that hypnosis will be employed as a mainstream technique in medicine, dentistry and psychological settings.

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