



Australian Hypnotherapists' Association
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A Member Association of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)
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c/- Committee Secretariat
Inquiry into Obesity in Australia
Standing Committee on Health & Ageing
PO Box 6021 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email 9th June, 2008: haa.reps@aph.gov.au

Inquiry into Obesity in Australia

Dear Standing Committee,

The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association (AHA) is pleased to be able to submit to this inquiry, and thank the Government for giving us the opportunity to do so.

Our Submission:

The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association would like to submit, that whilst education in the benefits of diet, exercise, monitoring the marketing and labelling of junk foods is important, we believe that lifestyle factors are of equal importance. We request that the committee include in their report the importance of emotional and physical wellbeing.

The lack of emotional and physical well-being leads to nurturing oneself with inappropriate self-medication. One of these self medicating treatments is nurturing oneself through the form of excessive eating. Repetitive behaviours move things from short-term memory to long-term memory that then becomes a habit. And like any habit, it becomes hard to break.

The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association believes that well trained clinical hypnotherapists already have the training required to implement strategies that deal with restructuring emotions and feelings, using visualization and increasing motivation at a sub-conscious level to facilitate weight release. Thus Hypnotherapists are able to assist the Government in its overall strategy to curb obesity in Australia, and so save additional expenditure on further training and encumber an already overstretched medical and nursing profession.

Research:

⁽¹⁾Professor Ron Grunstein, head of sleep research at the Woodcock Institute of Medical research In Sydney, said the findings by The National Centre for Health Statistics study of 80,000 Americans was the largest study of its kind to show the link between sleep hours and lifestyle problems.

The research showed that people who get between seven and eight hours sleep a night tend to be slimmer and generally living a healthier lifestyle than others. He said that prospective studies had already strongly suggested that lack of sleep could lead to obesity, especially in children and adolescents. Also, that sleep deprived people were more tired and less likely to exercise.

This study is supported by Wang, Chen and colleague May A. Beydoun, a post doctoral fellow at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, who reviewed 17 published studies on sleep duration and childhood obesity and they analysed 11 of them in their meta-analysis.

The recommended amount of daily sleep varied between studies analysed and with children's age. It is recommended that children under age 5 should sleep for 11 hours or more per day, children age 5 to 10 should sleep for 10 hours or more per day, and children over age 10 should sleep at least 9 hours per day.

The results of the analysis showed that children with the shortest sleep duration had a 92 percent higher risk of being overweight or obese compared to children with longer sleep duration. For children under age 5, shortest sleep duration meant less than 9 hours of sleep per day. For children ages 5 to 10 it meant less than 8 hours of sleep per day and less than 7 hours of sleep per day for children over 10. The association between increased sleep and reduced obesity risk was strongly associated with boys, but not in girls.

Note* Educating parents on how important sleep is, would seem to be something that should be incorporated in future training to curb obesity in Adults, but especially in our children.

⁽²⁾In a study involving 33 obese patients with a mass body index of 40, Swiss researchers found that through using a program that went beyond the standard obesity treatment approaches of a diet and exercise, more than half of these obese patients maintained a 10 kg weight reduction and overall 70% succeeded in avoiding further weight gain after five years.

Whilst many programs are successful in getting people to lose weight, long-term success rates are poor, with most dieters regaining their initial weight loss within a year. Very few – perhaps 5% - manage to keep the weight off in the long term.

However, this study that included workshops that addressed issues such as identifying the triggers for bingeing, reconnecting with the body, tuning in to hunger and fullness signals and expressing emotions, plus follow up sessions that included weighing and basic counselling found at the end of the five years, only 30% of the patients had regained weight, a total of 15% weighed about the same, and 55% had lost more weight, on average 10 kg in total. No diet drugs were used in the program.

⁽³⁾Griffith University psychologist, Dr Peta Stapleton, is trialling “psychological acupuncture”. (Renamed from its original name of ‘Emotional Freedom Technique’ or EFT.)

Dr Stapleton, who is also president of the Eating Disorders Association of Queensland, said “Psychological acupuncture can help over-ride our emotional and physiological responses to different stimuli including food”. “The technique has already been used to manage anxieties, phobias and debilitating symptoms such as flashbacks associated with post traumatic stress disorder.” “As well as resulting in healthier eating, we expect people to benefit from improved energy levels and psychological wellbeing.”

Note* Many hypnotherapists, have already been using this therapy in their practices for many years. This therapy focuses on the emotions that are blocking the client, and motivating alternative responses. This is done whilst finger- tapping on certain meridian points whilst using language that facilitates change.

⁽⁴⁾British scientists have shown that actively remembering your last meal suppresses appetite and reduces the desire to snack on junk food.

They have also shown that concentrating on food while eating – rather than grabbing a meal in front of the TV – makes you less likely to get hungry later on. Those who were not concentrating on their food – tended to snack more later in the day.

The findings come from Dr Suzanne Higgs and colleagues at the University of Birmingham. The findings suggest that weight watchers can teach themselves to be less greedy – and that techniques such as hypnotherapy and behavioural therapy could help.

Note* Clinical Hypnotherapists in their own practices already use these and many other techniques.

Roger Dobson in his article 'It's all in the mind' reports on how hypnotherapy is proving to be a powerful medical treatment – and is now available on the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK.

Hypnotherapy is increasingly being used to treat the symptoms of diseases and conditions as diverse as asthma, cystic fibrosis, snoring, migraines and warts.

It's been used to allow surgery and dental work without anaesthesia, and for pain-free childbirth without medication. And evidence from the UK's first and only NHS centre offering hypnotherapy shows that it's highly effective in treating irritable bowel syndrome.

Research from America has also found that more than half the people who used hypnotherapy to give up smoking were able to kick the habit, while researchers in France have successfully used the therapy to lower blood pressure.

Professor Peter Whorwell, a gastroenterologist at the University Hospital of South Manchester, who heads the NHS-funded hypnotherapy centre in Britain, which has been pioneering the therapy as a treatment of irritable bowel syndrome, says; "Cognitive behavioural therapy is now reasonably well accepted, and so, too, is psychotherapy, but of the three, I would say hypnotism is potentially the most powerful." And; "When I am dead and gone, people are going to suddenly realize that hypnotism is an incredibly powerful tool and question why it has been ignored for so long."

Note* There have been many other studies that have shown the efficacy of hypnotherapy. (Our members are trained to use hypnotherapy for therapeutical benefits as compared to stage hypnosis.)

Concluding submission:

The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association believes that since a large percentage of obesity is caused by underlying emotional problems that well trained clinical hypnotherapists already have the training required to implement strategies that deal with restructuring emotions, thoughts and feelings, using visualization and increasing motivation at a sub-conscious level to facilitate weight release.

Thus the Australian Hypnotherapists' Association would like to suggest that the Standing Committee consider that the evidence presented on hypnotherapy may suggest that the Department of Health and Ageing (pioneer a Government funded hypnotherapy centre to offer) and recognise hypnotherapy and clinical hypnotherapists that are members of a nationally recognised association, in treating obesity in Australia.

The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association is already an advisor to a number of Government Accrediting agencies on the use of hypnotherapy. The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association would be pleased to submit a hypnotherapy program format and run workshops for trained clinical hypnotherapists belonging to a National association to facilitate a recognized and consistent standard approved by the Department of Health and Ageing.

This would have the added benefit of reducing the cost of additional expenditure on further training and reduce the pressure on the already overstretched medical and nursing professions.

Yours sincerely,



B. Brewin JP

President of the Australian Hypnotherapists' Association,
The oldest and largest national hypnotherapy association in Australia

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