Research summary

Hypnosis CD reduces biological measure of inflammation associated with stress and improves resilience

Chronic stress and anxiety have been associated with inflammatory changes in the body, and high levels of inflammation have been linked to a number of acute and chronic conditions.

The authors of a pilot study recently published in Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice\(^1\) found that a self-administered hypnosis intervention significantly decreased levels of the cytokine IL-6 (Interleukin 6, a physiological measure of inflammation) and boosted resilience.

The 11 subjects who took part in the study – all healthy, normally coping and functioning individuals – were provided with a self-administered hypnosis stress reduction CD, to be used for a minimum of 5 days a week over a 12-week period. The CD contained two different hypnosis tracks; one to be played before sleep (25 minutes in duration), and the other to be played in the morning (lasting 7 minutes).

The aim of the CD was to recondition the stress response, by minimizing the subjects’ ‘excessive emotional and physical reaction to perceived work and life stressors, while facilitating their coping skills and resilience’. Blood tests and self-reported measures (using the StressScan assessment) were taken pre- and post-intervention.

While the authors acknowledge that elements of the study design and the small number of subjects involved (amongst other things) limits how far the results of this pilot study can be generalised, it ‘provides some promising suggestive evidence that a self-administered stress reduction program that is time simplistic and time efficient may be a clinically effective tool for modifying the stress response and boosting resilience’.
