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# **Growth in Hypnosis**

*The 1st European Congress of Hypnosis in Psychotherapy and Psychosomatic Medicine - May 29 - June 4, 1978, Malmo, Sweden.*

Just settling in from a whirlwind 11 day trip to Malmo, I thought S/S-AHP readers might like to share in some of the excitement of the happenings there. . .sharing new and old ideas and experiences among the 450 or more representatives from 32 countries.

The Congress was jointly sponsored by the International Society of Hypnosis (doctors, dentists, psychologists), the University of Lund, Sweden (9 departments participating), the Swedish Society for Psychological Medicine, and the Swedish Sociological Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (doctors, dentists, psychologists).

The very high level of the professional presentations of research and theory was really heavy but very supportive. Lots of medical terminology - that I was not too sure of but there were many basic research papers on what *Hypnosis* really is, how it works, how to measure it or its results, if/which neurophysiological correlates can be found as causal, accompanying or resulting, and how it relates to other altered states of consciousness. The workshop/discussion sessions were warm to cool and often with new exciting ideas presented or demonstrated. The side fringe private conversations/sessions were, of course, the most personally rewarding to me and to many others.

There were 3 days of workshop experiences offering 9 very attractive choices simultaneously (Oh to have 9 subpersonalities to send 1 to each!) Then there were 4 days of scientific meetings in 4 topic sections presenting over 100 papers, and invited addresses by Barry Wyke, Royal College of Surgeons of England, and Lewis R. Wolberg, Post-Graduate Centre for Mental Health, New York.

## **Formally**

Scientific Meeting were divided into four sections - morning sessions devoted to Symposiums of one of the sections 'big names'/important theories/researches and afternoons offered paper sessions from each of the four sections. (This does not count the other options of sunny beautiful beaches half hour away, shopping, sightseeing, eating ice cream on the lawn and conversing or having a long drawn out drink in a nice cool dark bar, or recovering from the disco, Viking Banquet or whatever from the night before.)

The four sectional Symposiums of the mornings were: 1) "Neurophysiology and Altered States of Consciousness". 2) "Modalities of Psychotherapy". 3) "Psychosomatic Medicine". 4) "Psychological Research in Hypnosis".

Scanning the program to see the many applications of hypnosis (and other altered states of consciousness) as used or researched by participants was inspiring. The conclusions were the usual - this idea is a useful adjunct that may work with some people in some cases with some practitioners. . .but proceed with caution (and good control groups).

While many clinical applications of hypnosis are being studied and researched, this congress found these ready to be reported:

Burns/emergency room and catastrophe medicine, surgery (pre as well as post op), acute/chronic pain syndromes and clinics, hypertension and heart/circulatory problems, in cancer with pain/building body defenses and attempts at remission, gastrointestinal disorders, in dentistry with surgery/orthodontic appliances/bruxism/gagging/thumbsucking/relaxation/pain and bleeding control, obesity, chronic child ailments, asthma/allergies, phobias, original handedness and brain laterality/hemisphere work in psychotherapy and sexual dysfunction, apparent sterility, anxiety, anorexia nervosa, hysterias, many psychosomatic conditions, and the use of hypnosis in combination with behaviour therapy.

Exciting and of special interest to AHPers would have been seeing the many colleagues moving in the direction of the use of altered states of consciousness (especially hypnosis) for growth process. . .not just treatment for growth but also for positive learning and new ways of growth as in relaxation, creativity in art, music, literature, imagery, learning new skills and languages, dream study, problem solving, future/past vision, meditation, memory/learning research, laterality/brain hemisphere/limbic brain research, and even research on the tracing of genetic memory transmissions via age regressions.

Long gone are the old views of the hypnoterapist as a Mesmer or a Svengali with supercontrol over the hypnotizee's mind . . .repeatedly comes the message that the hypnoterapist is only the guide. . .while the person undergoing the hypnosis chooses where to follow.

### **Informally**

There were two really high points for me. The first was the opportunity to see Dave Cheek, Amercian gynaecologist at work, at work in that there were two showing of a film of him working with patients, and he gave many informal sessions. He used hypnosis with ideomotor signalling in this case taking many volunteers back to early childhood or natal experiences demonstrating the use of his techniques for working with many sexual, pregnancy and presumed sterility problems. Many experienced their own birth as he worked. Some childless women 'saw' the date, weight, and sex of their

first baby. It will be of much interest to hear how successful these predictions turn out to be. He saw the rebirth experiencing as a way of relooking at experiences that may have developed into blocks of ability to conceive or to enjoy sexual experiences fully.

The second most stimulating event for me was a happening I 'sort of' designed. Hearing some interest in watching (as well as listening to) each other to learn new ways of working I proposed an impromptu practical/sharing experiential session. With an American friend, Shirley Sanders, we invited whoever wanted to participate to an evening's informal session. We all (maybe 30) watched/tried/dyaded and for practice/demonstrated/played as hypnotizer/hypnotizee and learned from each other. A really fun session with many countries represented and many new ways of induction and deepening shown. A high point of the conference many said. It was as a closing for this meeting that an Italian doctor took two volunteers through natal experiences and was headed for taking them on back through millenia past demonstrating his research on genetic memory transmissions as recoverable through age regression in hypnosis. Fascinating ideas but still a long way from being proven!

Several other events made my trip to Sweden a really important occasion to me. . .confirming my last - minute decision that at that time and place, Sweden was where I needed to be for the Congress meetings.

The workshop I attended (24 hours of professional continuing education credit) was Hypnosis in Pain and Pain Relief' with Basil Finer and Harold Crasilneck. Finer, an English anesthesiologist who has lived in Sweden many years initiated the use of hypnosis in surgery in Sweden years ago. He's a warm responsive man who is doing fascinating research on pain relief in addition to his clinical/teaching roles. Harold Crasilneck is an American psychologist clinician/teacher/researcher who was an initiator of one of the first pain clinics in the USA. He has published widely in the hypnosis field. Interesting discussions and participation of many with their own experiences in pain work were included.

I sat in for one day with the really great participative session conducted by the English Peter Blythe, psychologist, and Don Ebrahim, Coventry medical doctor. This workshop was on Muscular Tension Release Therapy and combined hypnosis/Reich/Lowen/Blythe with a lot of good brain theory grounding by Don. Demonstrations, practice sessions and open interaction and Don and Peter's personal styles made this workshop especially optimal as a learning environment.

There were informal demonstrations of hypnosis with children by three well known practitioners each using a different method of induction and working style.

The informal sessions on shamanism and hypnosis, and the opportunity to talk with doctors working in 'shaman' oriented cultures was unique. Particu-

larly I valued hearing how they combine modern professional clinical hypnosis practices with their own culture's shamanistic beliefs. It was a real lesson in the need to work with the client's belief system rather than in opposition to it. .no matter what/who are your own culture's local 'shamans'. One participant laid claim to being the local 'witch doctor' along with his position as the teaching psychiatrist at his local university clinic.

The opportunity to meet again with old friends and colleagues from the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis (doctor, dentist, psychologist members) was heartwarming as I am especially proud of the work each of them is doing: Baumann, pediatrician, and Biederman and Thompson, as dentists, Ewin's rapid healing cases on burn units, and psychologist Sanders' work on group use of hypnotic dreams. Great people, as well as warm and loving! I especially enjoyed the opportunity to get better acquainted with many of the British Congress attendees. The informal settings gave time for talk and interchange I valued thoroughly. A very special thanks to the 6 more UK doctors who came along to our impromptu practice/sharing session to demonstrate the variety of techniques they use for special situations. It was really great to have them join in the informal 'sit on the floor while we show each other what we do' as doctors with our own people in our own settings. The group feeling was very strong and generated a real high for many of us.

There is no real way to adequately convey fully the total Congress experience! I made/brought some tapes and have many memories and ideas of who's going what/where if people would like more information. Do feel free to get in touch with me at Bray House, Duke of York Street, London SW1. 01 903 6455.