PTSD related Insomnia and its Treatment with Hypnotherapy

There is a large amount of academic literature and research on insomnia but very few papers that look at the efficacy of hypnotherapy and hypnosis in its treatment. One of the first papers that looked at hypnotherapy as option included Stanton (1989) which conducted a clinical controlled study that had 45 participants. Each of the participants were randomly assigned to either a hypnotherapy treatment, stimulus control or a placebo treatment plans. The only group to see a statistically significant reduction in sleep-onset latency was the hypnotherapy group.

Those that suffer from PTSD commonly complain of insomnia and its related sleep disorders. To date there is very little research on hypnosis and insomnia treatment for combat veterans. The purpose of the study found in the International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis was to look at the efficacy of hypnosis in reducing insomnia and its related symptoms and comparing its results with a pharmacotherapy group. There were thirty two male veterans in total all suffering from PTSD combat related insomnia. The criteria for inclusion in the study included being diagnosed with PTSD according to DSM-IV convention, an age range between 21 to 40 years, and had the competence to give informed consent. Prior to the study, all participants had for a minimum of two months been taking a SSRI treatment (anti depressant).

Participants of the study were assigned to one of two groups: the symptom oriented hypnotherapy or zolpidem, a short term insomnia medication. The hypnotherapy sessions were administered in two 1.5 hour sessions twice a week for two weeks by a board certified practicing psychiatrist hypnotherapist. Those in the medication group were given zolpidem for 14 days.

The study found that those in the hypnotherapy treatment group reported a 76.4% improvement in their ability to sleep compared to 26.6% of those in the standard treatment protocol group. 82.3% in the hypnotherapy group were shown to have increased their total sleeping time compared with 66.6% of the zolpidem group. Post treatment, 88.2% of the hypnotherapy group reported an excellent or good quality of sleep level, this compared to 26.6% of the zolpidem group.

This study was the first of its kind that looked at hypnotherapy, insomnia and PTSD. Although the results of the study were highly promising, the study noted some limitations which included the relatively small sample size. Future studies should include larger sample sizes to build upon this research and to hopefully replicate its findings that hypnotherapy can be a promising form of treatment for those that suffer PTSD and insomnia.

References