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## Hypnosis Gaining Ground as Successful Therapy

Lulwa Shalhoub, Arab News

**JEDDAH, 29 March 2007** — The scene of a person lying on a couch with eyes fixed on a pendulum swung to and fro by a hypnotherapist is something widely seen in the movies. However, this is something that many people in the Kingdom are unfamiliar with.

Certified hypnotherapist Mona Mahdi is a Saudi woman who has shown many people in the Kingdom that hypnosis, in reality, is often done in this way.

Mona Mahdi studied child psychology in the US; she became a certified hypnotist in 1999 and is working at the Erfan and Bagedo Hospital in Jeddah. When she initially began hypnotizing people, many of her patients were skeptical. This is in spite of the fact that hypnotherapy is considered to be an alternative medicine. When she first began practicing, in order to avoid people being cynical about hypnosis, Mahdi would call herself a self-improvement trainer.

When Mona Mahdi asks her clients to describe what hypnosis is, they describe it as a state between sleep and consciousness that forces one to surrender his or her mental power and physical control to magic. Some people think that they are actually sleeping when they are hypnotized. This misconception stems from the Arabic term for hypnosis, which can be translated literally as “magnetic sleeping.”

However, Mahdi describes hypnosis to be an altered state of mind when a person becomes highly receptive to positive thinking and where there is communication between the conscious and the subconscious minds. “When we are hypnotized, we are using our inner imagination, which is equal to the subconscious. The subconscious mind is larger and more powerful than the conscious mind,” said Mahdi.

Hypnotherapy is used as an adjunct to psychiatry, psychology and other medical fields including neurology, obstetrics, emergency medicine, and burn therapy. Mahdi said that some people can be cured through medicines, but there are some who are sick of taking medicine and so opt for hypnotherapy as an alternative.

Things have changed over the years. “You could see people on the street pretending to be hypnotherapists until the Health Ministry stopped the practice and regulated the sector to see who is really qualified and who isn’t,” said Mahdi.

It was after this that she began using the word hypnosis to advertise her services. “Many people think that when they become hypnotized they go out of their minds. Hypnotized people cannot be asleep. When they’re hypnotized they say, ‘Oh I’m still here.’ I tell them of course you are here or else how are we going to dialogue. You are not out of control,” she said.

The tools she uses for hypnosis includes pendulums, shoelaces and her voice. Mahdi said a person who does not want to be hypnotized cannot be hypnotized or be induced to do or say something they do not want. She added that while carrying out hypnosis, she has to be very careful because people may be experiencing a dramatic experience.

Mahdi spends a lot of time with her clients and holds three to four sessions a week with each client. The first session usually takes around 60-90 minutes and is a pre-assessment session. "One of the key factors that make my clients come back to me is that they want somebody to listen to them," she said.

Hypnosis can treat people suffering from insomnia, anxiety, self-confidence, various phobias, depression, memory loss, obesity, pain management, smoking, cancer, and headaches. Hypnosis is also used to help people during pre and post surgery and childbirth.

Mahdi said the majority of her clients are adults aged above 25. She also sees teenagers and children. Many of her clients suffer depression. "Hypnosis is a wonderful way to help one to use his or her mind to help deal with stress and depression," she added. Some of the cases she has dealt with involved people wanting to commit suicide.