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health

Hypnotherapy 'could ease chest pain'

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Pic: Oliver Lim

Hypnotherapy was 80 per cent successful in reducing pain

Hypnotherapy could offer relief from severe chest pain that is not caused by a heart condition.

Researchers found 80 per cent reported 'significant' relief from pain after undergoing the treatment.

About a third of people who have chest pain have no identifiable cause for why they suffer. Researchers believe that acid reflux or psychological problems could be to blame - and young women seem to be more prone to getting the pain.

Now, in a small study of 28 patients, 15 people given hypnotherapy reported "significant" relief from pain. This compared to three of the 13 people treated with another type of "supportive therapy" and given a placebo.

Hypnotherapy also significantly improved the sense of overall wellbeing and reduced the use of painkillers and other drugs needed to control the condition.

In contrast, the group treated with supportive therapy actually reported taking more drugs. However, hypnotherapy did not affect levels of anxiety or depression among those given the treatment.

The study, published in the journal Gut by the British Medical Journal, noted that there were drawbacks to using hypnotherapy - it is labour intensive and can be expensive.

However, the authors, led by Professor Peter Whorwell at Wythenshawe Hospital in Manchester, said the results were "clear-cut" and the treatment could have "considerable potential" for treating the condition.

Previous research by the group has shown that hypnotherapy benefits those with irritable bowel syndrome, with most patients remaining well in the long-term, requiring far less medication and making fewer visits to the doctor.

Brain scans of patients treated with hypnotherapy for other conditions have also shown that it directly

affects a region of the brain which processes the emotional reaction to a painful stimulus.

Hypnotherapy has also been shown to cut the levels of gastric acid produced by the stomach.

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