

# Netcare Milpark Hospital

## Media Feature

### **The bloodless operation**

Johannesburg patient's tonsils removed under hypnosis

*Tuesday, November 27, 2007* Imagine an operation that results in very little bleeding, very little pain and an almost immediate release from hospital... It sounds like science fiction, does it not? But with hypnotic suggestion, it is becoming clear that this kind of surgical experience is indeed possible, with the right patient and in the right circumstances. "And if you're the right patient, surgery becomes a genuinely empowering - and pain-free - experience!" says Johannesburg resident Liesl van Dreau,

When Liesl discovered that she needed a tonsillectomy, she decided that it was a wonderful opportunity to test a skill she herself was learning. Liesl was doing a course with the SA Institute of Hypnotism with the aim of becoming an accredited hypnotherapist. She approached her lecturer, highly qualified hypnotherapist Tom Budge, with the suggestion that her tonsils be removed under hypnosis rather than anaesthetic.

Interestingly enough surgery under hypnotic trance has been successfully practised around the world for some time. It so happened that another student with the Institute was a practising and very experienced anaesthetist, Dr Ian Lander. He spoke to the ENT surgeon, Kishen Dayal, who agreed, with the proviso that the patient be prepared to undergo a general anaesthetic if it becomes necessary. It was furthermore important that Liesl was assessed to ascertain if she was an appropriate subject. It is important to remember that for hypnosis to work in place of a general anaesthetic, the patient must be an appropriate subject for hypnosis, and the surgical technique and equipment must also be appropriate.

Liesl spent two one-and-a-half hour sessions with Tom Budge, prior to the surgery. Then the great day, 23 November, dawned. In Netcare Milpark

*Tonsils removed under hypnosis ... / more*

*Tonsils removed under hypnosis ... / two*

Hospital Liesl was visited by Dr Lander. He chatted to her and later accompanied her to the theatre to see where it would all happen and to meet the personnel who would be involved.

Liesl was given no drugs and no analgesia whatsoever. She was placed on the table in a seated position (the table can be manipulated into this position), and thoroughly prepped. Dr Lander had decided to ensure that, should it become necessary at any stage, they would be ready and able to go straight to anaesthetic. Monitors were therefore positioned on the patient just as they normally are, and a drip was inserted into her hand.

Liesl and Tom Budge were then left alone for the inducement of the trance state, which took just a little more than six minutes. And then the surgery began.

Dr Dayal was "literally amazed" at the lack of pain experienced during the procedure and the reduction in bleeding: "Any slight bleeding that occurred stopped spontaneously," he says.

"The surgeon did one side, and then the patient indicated she'd like a break. She took a minute to collect herself and swallow, then we did the other side," explains Dr Lander. "There was minimal bleeding - in fact, the reduction in bleeding was dramatic. 30 minutes later, we were finished. The patient had a Coke in recovery and about 30 or 40 minutes later she asked for something for pain. We gave her a moderate painkiller."

Dr Dayal, who says he's never known a tonsillectomy adult patient take a drink in the recovery room, found the insignificant amount of pain experienced by Liesl quite stunning. "This is one of the most painful operations that we as ENTs do in the adult patient, and the pain continues for up to two weeks afterwards," he explains. "They usually need a significant amount of analgesia." He says that he can see a role for hypnosis in reducing pain and recovery times, and would be very willing to repeat the experience with another appropriate patient.

*Tonsils removed under hypnosis ... / more*

*Tonsils removed under hypnosis ... / three*

Says Liesl, "It was an awesome experience, one I would highly recommend. There was a bit of pain after the operation, but nothing compared to what I'd been told I could expect - more discomfort than pain, really. There was virtually no bleeding and no swelling. I was released from hospital one hour after the operation, and the recovery has been very fast in subsequent days."

Incidentally, Liesl has a means of comparing what she *might have* experienced with her *actual* experience. Hypnosis works by giving the patient 'suggestions' that in the trance state, during the op, she will experience no pain, bleeding and the like. She and Tom Budge focused, of course, on the site of the op in her throat, and they forgot about the drip that would be inserted in her hand. And this is the one part of her anatomy, she says, which today is hurting and bruised!

"It is so much better to do it this way," Liesl exclaims. "Usually, going to hospital for an operation is a difficult and disempowering time. This was, by contrast, such an empowering experience."

With the co-operation and proactive involvement of highly experienced surgeons such as ENT specialist Dr Dayal, and with anaesthetists like Dr Lander and his wife, who is another anaesthetist learning the skill and who assisted in Liesl's operation, hypnosis may become another weapon in the surgical profession's armamentarium.

"Not only will it help many patients, but will also reduce costs," says Dr David Spiegel, associate chair of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine. "In the last five years we've begun doing randomised trials for acute surgical and medical pain. We have got a number of studies that now show that hypnosis reduces pain, anxiety complications and the amount of medication people need, while making the procedures shorter by 17 to 20 minutes per procedure." ([www.sciencentral.com](http://www.sciencentral.com))

*Tonsils removed under hypnosis ... / more*

*Tonsils removed under hypnosis ... / four*

This can only be a good thing!

*Ends*

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