

Hypnotise your way to success

"LOOK into my eyes, not around the room, just into my eyes – and you're under..." When you think of hypnotism, it's TV tricks and showmen such as Paul McKenna that often spring to mind. But a growing body of published research is aiming to explore the scientific side of hypnotism, and St George's is now one of 14 medical schools to offer a special study module in the discipline.

Honorary Lecturer Ursula James, who teaches the course, says it has long been recognised as a vital tool in the medical kit. She says: "Ever since 1952, the BMA has directed that hypnosis should be taught in medical school, at least to those who were going to go into anaesthesia or psychology. The research into it is not necessarily widescale, but it is becoming much more acceptable.

"Hypnosis is recognised as a unique brain state, in which certain pathways can be opened and closed"

Hypnosis was first used medically in World War I as an anaesthetic and later to help soldiers recover from shellshock, so it has been around a lot longer than people think.

I think the term bothers people because they think about stage hypnosis when they hear it, rather than the psychological dimension."

A breakthrough in legitimising the science of hypnosis was through the use of MRI scanners, with brain scans of people under hypnosis indicating that they enter a different cognitive state.

Ursula says: "Hypnosis is recognised as a unique brain state, in which certain pathways can be opened and closed.

So, if you think of parts of the brain as gates, to an area of pain for example, hypnosis allows some of the gates to be opened and

closed so that people can perceive pain in slightly a different way.

"In a medical context, hypnosis could help people who have got claustrophobia, for example. It could help them remain still while they're inside a scanner.

Broadly, it's a skill that is an extremely useful addition to any problematic practice."

Students on the hypnosis SSM are not only taught how to use hypnosis techniques to calm patients during consultations, but also learn how to perform self-hypnosis, as a method of stress-relief.

"Communication is so vital to a doctor's job, and many use the techniques I teach on the course without even knowing it.

You may call it a good 'bedside manner' but talking to patients in a way that calms them in stressful situations can be taught."

Teaching certainly keeps Ursula busy, as she juggles her course diary with a successful writing career and TV work.

She even has a regular slot on LBC's Jim Davis Show and now has her own TV series, Sex, Lies and Hypnosis on Channel 5.

Ursula has written The Clinical Hypnosis Textbook, and You Can Be Amazing, a self-help book.

Her third book on weight loss is out in June, and she is currently completing her first novel.

She also has a range of CDs, which are available from her website, on subjects such as smoking and anxiety.

Though spare time often seems



All in the mind: Ursula James juggles teaching hypnosis with writing and media work

a luxury, Ursula wouldn't have it any other way.

"I teach at 14 different medical schools, I write books, I see clients, I do TV and I have another book coming out this summer. I truly consider myself to be really lucky as I never have an average day."

An Ursula James Self-Hypnosis Workshop will take place on Sunday, March 16 from 10am to 4pm at The Light Centre, Belgravia.

The course will teach self-hypnosis and tell you how to gain the best from life by creating your own positive and beneficial suggestions. ■

CONTACTS

■ To book a place on the course call 020 7262 1659 or reserve online at www.ursulajames.com

■ All St George's staff will receive a £20 discount on the £85 standard rate

■ You Can Think Yourself Thin, Ursula's new book on a weight control solution that doesn't involve dieting, will be out on June 5