

MAGIC & HEALTHCARE

Magic has been used in healthcare since the dawn of time. With the advent of modern science, however, magic has been banned from the healing process. Over the past thirty years, however, the magician has made a gradual comeback into the medical establishment. The contemporary use of conjuring to heal illness and disease differs greatly from the traditional approach. Magic effects are used to assist the healing process, but are ostensibly presented as tricks instead of real magic. The magician or medical professional does not feign to possess supernatural powers to heal the patient.

Magic tricks can be used actively, where the patient is taught a trick as part of a therapy, or passively, where the patient is a spectator. Active therapies are used in occupational and physical therapy for improved muscle control, improved cognitive skills, and to increase self-esteem. Passive magic is often used to reduce anxiety in pediatric patients, e.g. Child Life Specialists, Pediatric Radiologists, etc.

HEALING OF MAGIC is the organization most healthcare professionals contact when seeking information and/or training for rehabilitation professionals. Kevin Spencer (Founder, Healing of Magic) is widely considered the international leading authority of the therapeutic benefits of simple magic tricks in rehabilitation. Much research has been conducted in this area and a number of academic publications have been produced over the years.

PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

The use of magic tricks is most widely accepted in the field of Physical and Occupational Therapy. The most organized and efficient program is HEALING OF MAGIC. Spencer serves as an Assistant Professor in the Occupational Therapy Department of the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

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MENTAL HEALTH CARE

A large amount of literature on the active and passive use of magic tricks has been published over the years. Letting patients perform magic tricks is used to enhance their self-esteem while performing magic tricks by the therapist has been used to assist in diagnosis.

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NURSING & CHILD LIFE SPECIALISTS

The use of magic tricks in nursing and child life is mainly related to performing tricks to children in order to help children cope (Hart and Walton 2010). The practice is very common with Clown Doctors seen in many hospitals around the world. Even the prestigious journal, The Lancet, has published two articles dedicated to this phenomenon (Oppenheim et al. 1997 and Spitzer 2006).

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DENTISTRY

The use of magic tricks in dentistry is similar to nursing and mainly used to put young patients at ease. Peretz and Gluck (2005) found that when performing a magic trick for children reduces the time it takes them to get them to sit in the dreaded chair. Schwartz (2003) describes a ready-made magic show for dentists.

Peretz, B., & Gluck, G. (2005). *Magic trick: A behavioral strategy for the management of strong-willed children*. *International Journal of Pediatric Dentistry*, 15, 429–436. doi:10.1038/sj.ebd.6400431

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