

Research Paper

Exploring Hypnotherapy: An Analytical Perspective on Its Role in Integrative Health and Well-being

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ABSTRACT

Hypnotherapy is considered one of the oldest and safest therapies. It involves guided relaxation and focused attention. It is emerging as an important part of integrative medicine and health practice. **Background:** As integrative medicine advances, there is increasing curiosity in non-traditional medicinal techniques, including hypnotherapy, which supports conventional interventions and improves global well-being. **Objectives:** The purpose of this paper is to discuss hypnotherapy in the context of integrative health which critically assesses its efficacy in treating stress, anxiety, and pain, as well as other psychosomatic disorders. **Method:** A brief literature review referring to secondary investigations overlaying hypnotherapy. These aspects of evaluation comprised various criteria regarding hypnotherapy concerning changing the patient's physiological and psychological status. **Results:** The research findings suggest that hypnotherapy is a useful treatment modality for alleviating anxiety, chronic pain, and stress-related conditions. Patients who received hypnotherapy as a holistic counseling approach improved their psychological and emotional health and resilience. Furthermore, hypnotherapy was identified as a safe procedure, and clients tolerated it well and reported few side effects. **Conclusions:** In integrative health and well-being, hypnotherapy can be a powerful complementary practice because of its noninvasive and nonpharmacological nature. Further studies are needed to define more specific and clear working hypotheses that investigate long-term outcomes of hypnotherapy in different patient groups.

Keywords: *Hypnotherapy, Integrative health, integrative medicine, Wellbeing, Holistic counseling*

Over the last few years, there has been an increasing emphasis on integrative health and well-being. Integrative health works on the concept that enables the whole person to attain health involving the physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual nature of the individual. This treatment approach uses conventional therapies, including hypnotherapy, acupuncture, yoga, mindfulness, and herbal remedies. The objective is to design an individualized and holistic approach to care that is client-centered and addresses not only the disease but also the client herself or himself (Blaszko et al., 2020).

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Among the complementary therapies practiced in today's integrative health systems, hypnotherapy has been noted to be getting increased attention. Hypnotherapy then employs hypnosis to galvanize attention, relaxation, and acceptance of suggestions. During this altered state of consciousness, their mind is more open to suggestion, when it comes to mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders therapeutically (Kihlstrom, 2013). Hypnotherapy has been practiced for thousands of years; however, it has only been acknowledged in the past few decades for its scientific application in curing numerous disorders. It is now being applied not only in psychotherapy but also in treating chronic pain, stress, anxiety, depression, and even behavioral modification such as smoking cessation as well as biofeedback for weight loss (Elkins et al., 2015).

Hypnotherapy is gradually being incorporated into the mainstream body of health care due to the growth of integrative medicine that incorporates several approaches to managing patients. Different from the ordinary medicine practice that largely tends to address disease in terms of bodily illness, integrative health recognizes that the state of the mind affects health. Stress for instance has often been linked with various illnesses including heart diseases, and autoimmune diseases among others (Hammond, 2010). The efficiency of hypnotherapy for stress and clients' emotional issues might be more lasting and enhanced in comparison with using other methods.

Further, as it has been evidenced; hypnotherapy can be beneficial in specific situations where mainstream medicine has low efficacy rates. For example, long-term pain such as cancer and arthritis can be relieved by medication which is why hypnotherapy can be used as an additional measure (Jensen et al., 2014). This not only helps in the reduction of booked doses of painkillers but also helps in minimizing their drawbacks and the degree of addiction that is associated with them. Likewise, in the case of anxiety or trauma patients, hypnotherapy is a non-pharmacological, less intrusive, and more efficient way of dealing with embedded psychological problems than talk therapy (Alladin & Alibhai, 2007).

The usage of hypnotherapy in the modern developing health and wellness programs refers to the modern concept of individualized approach to the patient. Since it acts as an interface between the psychological and physical characteristics of health-related disorders, hypnotherapy has the potential to balance traditional curative methods along with the increasing emergence of individualized therapies for health.

This paper will discuss and review the use of hypnotherapy within an integrative health approach. More precisely, it will consider how it can be used in stress reduction, pain management, enhancement of emotional health, and as a tool to encourage behavior change. As a result, this paper seeks to discuss hypnotherapy as one of the foundational therapies that should be integrated into integrative healthcare systems.

HYPNOTHERAPY: AN OVERVIEW

Different forms of therapies are commonly practiced with hypnosis as one of the prime therapeutic tools that involve the use of hypnosis to achieve a state of profound psychological, physiological, and mental relaxation known as trance. In this hypnosis-like condition people become more open to therapeutic suggestions to work on unconscious factors internal conflicts or even wrong patterns of behavior (Elkins et al., 2015). The basic concept of hypnotherapy is that a person when in the hypnotic state is more willing to express material that a practitioner will then be able to help the client change thought processes or behaviors that contribute to different mental and physical disorders.

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Hypnotherapy can be used to treat many mental disorders and various physical illnesses as well. Some of the conditions it is applied to include anxiety, depression, stress and phobias, chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, behavior modification such as smoking cessation, and weight loss among others. As such, it is applied within integrative health systems where emphasis on mental and emotional health is important as part of holistic health (Hammond, 2010).

The principle of Hypnotherapy is based on the theory that one can easily manipulate the subconscious part of the brain where most of peoples' behavior, actions, and feelings are said to be located. By leading the patients into a hypnotic state, therapists can easily assist the patients in changing their unhealthy cognitive structures to healthy states. For instance, hypnotherapy can assist in the redirection of focus from the pain and present an option of relaxation and encountering new manners of dealing with the pain in chronic pain patients (Jensen et al., 2014).

TYPES OF HYPNOTHERAPIES

Hypnotherapy comes in many forms, and all the different kinds work in different ways to address the psychological and physical problems that may be faced. The most commonly used forms include:

Cognitive Behavioral Hypnotherapy (CBH):

CBT is otherwise experienced with the assistance of hypnosis which makes this form of hypnotherapy known as cognitive behavioral hypnotherapy. In CBH, the therapist applies hypnosis to assist the patient in noticing the patterned maladaptive cognitions and behavior and then changing them. Whereas with CBT, it is often difficult to bring the change in behavior in the early sessions, with CBH it is made possible to achieve desired behavior modifications in a quicker way that is most effective in cases like anxiety disorders, depression, and phobias. The patients are helped to relax and reach a state that helps them adopt positive rather than negative thinking (Alladin, 2008). For example, people with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) can use CBH to modify and evaluate negatively formed self-records about social events while in deep relaxation; a technique that disorients the action and brings down the levels of anxiety when undertaking the activity in the future.

Ericksonian Hypnotherapy:

Milton Hyland Erickson gave Ericksonian Hypnotherapy, he was an American Psychiatrist and Psychologist Specializing in medical hypnosis and family therapy. He was the founding president of the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis. Sometimes called the 'date rape hypnosis', this is not as straightforward as other methods and is called the 'Ericksonian' approach in honor of the psychiatrists of the name. This form of hypnotherapy is considered more refined and personalized as compared to other available kinds of therapies as it involves metaphorical and narrative suggestions rather than imperative directions. To Erickson, the self had an inherent capacity to transform or heal, through hypnosis, the consultant merely led the client to the change. This method may benefit patients who cannot respond well to direct suggestions or may require a more colorful and, therefore, personal approach to their therapies. Ericksonian hypnotherapy is usually applied to interventions for trauma, phobia, and various other complex emotional disorders.

Traditional Hypnotherapy:

This is the simplest type of hypnosis where the therapist immediately makes certain suggestions to the patient while he or she is hypnotized. It has been applied in the

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administration of anesthesia in controlling habits which include smoking, and in the treatment of sleeping disorders. While not as flexible as the Ericksonian hypnosis, traditional hypnosis is usually helpful for patients who are good at direct instructions.

HYPNOTHERAPY for Physical Health and Well-being

Hypnotherapy also has curative functions, which in certain cases can be used along with traditional medical treatments. Hence, Integrative health and well-being hold that hypnotherapy is highly useful in dealing with psychological and physiological ailments. For instance, fibromyalgia and arthritis are conditions that benefit from hypnotherapy when combined with traditional pain medication; the dosage of the drugs taken reduces the hypnotherapy assisting in the reduction of side effects of the drugs (Elkins, 2015).

Moreover, hypnotherapy has been effective in treating stress-related disorders since patients can learn how to lower physical stress indicators such as heart rate or blood pressure using relaxation procedures that are put into action during hypnosis (Hammond, 2010). It has also been used in digestive disorders, especially in IBS in which psychological stress is known to worsen the disorder and hypnotherapy comes in handy in helping the patient to relax to ease the symptoms (Whorwell, 2008).

Hypnotherapy in Integrative Health

Hypnotherapy is one of the main integrative health modalities that enhances traditional medical management interventions. It is a therapeutic approach that takes into consideration not only somatic complaints but also psychological and emotional components of a patient's illness which are also in accord with the principles of integrative medicine. In this segment, learners will get insights into how hypnotherapy helps in areas like stress, pain, emotions, and behaviors in explaining how it enhances a person's health.

Stress Reduction

Stress is accepted as one of the major causes of chronic non-specific diseases like cardiovascular diseases, autoimmune diseases, and mental health issues. Sustained stress is associated with high cortisol, which has been associated with the overall adverse impact on the immune system and metabolic process coupled with high blood pressure and rates of heartbeat. It can be observed that hypnotherapy has helped many cases of stress since it helps the patient achieve deep relaxation and gives the body attention.

The procedure used in hypnotherapy involves leading the patient through relaxation so that they are taken through a normal process of hypnosis which will lower their physiological sign/s of stress. Stress-related disorders include chemical synthesis through cortisol by which hypnosis has been discovered to have the potential to reduce cortisol levels, blood pressure, and heart rate (Hammond, 2010). This is more so in integrative health because when stress is lowered, it sets off a positive domino effect on a patient's health. For instance, in those who are on chronic stress or burnt-out hypnotherapy relieves the effects of anxiety, exhaustion, and sleeping disorders in the body.

Pain Management

Now, chronic pain is described not only in terms of physiological markers but also in terms of suffering that is accompanied not only by the physical sensation of pain but also by a range of affective symptoms. Hypnotherapy has been investigated more than other types of therapy in chronic pain, especially in disorders like fibromyalgia, arthritis, and cancer pain. Sometimes, it is a hard call to manage pain through medication and often, taking excessive

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pain relievers may not be helpful since it causes side effects such as becoming an addictive substance. Hypnosis can therefore be used to help the patient lower his or her perception of pain and cope more effectively with pain.

In a meta-analysis study, (Jensen et al. 2017) further revealed that there was consistent evidence of hypnosis being effective in the reduction of pain in clinical practice. Barnaby and O'Brien suggested that hypnotherapy is effective since it enables the patients to ignore the pain and therefore reduce its intensity. For instance, in fibromyalgia patients, who used to exhibit severe pain and tenderness in various areas of the body, the efficacy of hypnotherapy was revealed in this study to be useful in lowering the level of pain, improving sleep, and consequently the general quality of life. In the same regard, patients diagnosed with cancer-related pain have provided testimony on how hypnotherapy helped them to better manage pain when in sessions (Jensen et al., 2014). Most chronic pain, in any case, means reliance on medicines, and this is another way in which hypnotherapy can be beneficial in the long run by decreasing not just the pain but the medicines needed to alleviate that pain and their accompanying side effects.

In hypnotherapy, the patients can be led into a relaxed state, which is a type of trance that decreases the physiological signs of stress. Studies have shown that hypnosis can reduce cortisol stress hormone levels, blood pressure, and pulse rate, and thus can be effective in the treatment of stress-related disorders (Hammond, 2010). This is especially the case in integrative health where no one will be surprised that stress reduction will have a domino effect on the patient's health. For instance, hypnotherapy can be applied to patients experiencing chronic stress or burnout resulting in anxiety, fatigue, or sleep deprivation to bring balance to the body as well as the mind.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Self-help hypnosis is also used in the control of several mental and emotional conditions such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and phobias. Mental health conditions, frequently arise from or involve feelings that may be buried or subconscious and so are not easily reached solely through talk therapy. Another benefit of hypnotherapy is that it is instrumental in the healing process since the feelings that result from such occurrences are well stored in the subconscious part of the mind and can be erased or changed through the hypnotherapist's help.

Scientific research has confirmed that when changing the people's focus and functioning by using hypnosis it has a positive impact on the ways of the individuals dealing with anxiety and depression. In the study by Alladin and Alibhai (2007), there was a positive change in the use of hypnotherapy for anxiety and depression in how patients dealt with stress, their emotions, and challenges. In persons diagnosed with PTSD, hypnotherapy can ease the recall of traumatic events and goal-centered strategies to diminish intrusive thoughts and flashbacks since hypnotherapeutic interventions are more effective on formerly traumatized clients when administered in a hypnosis state.

As such, integrative health needs to consider the emotional aspect since people's mental state is known to affect their physical health. For instance, patients with chronic illnesses like diabetes or cardiovascular diseases are likely to have depression or anxiety which will compound the health complications. This then makes it easier to treat these emotional challenges using hypnotherapy to result in better health status and quality of life (Hammond, 2010).

Behavioral Change

Another popular area of applied use of hypnotherapy is as a tool for modification of behavior including treatment of substance abuse and obesity. The kinds of behaviors like smoking, overeating, drug taking, or even excessive drinking are habits that are so hard to change due to their long-time association with the user's physiology. The good thing with hypnotherapy is that it addresses the emotions that lead to these behaviors as well as the subconscious habits that are deep-rooted thus making long-lasting solutions.

For instance, whereas the success of hypnotherapy to support smoking cessation was established to be twice that of control treatments such as nicotine replacement therapy (Green and Lynn, 2000) Hypnotherapy is more effective in the psychological sense because it has the chances of changing the behavior of the individuals and helps in the formation of a stronger will power so that people can quit the bad habits such as smoking and hereby does not involve the physical withdrawal symptoms of quitting smoking.

Likewise, hypnotherapy has positive results in weight control since the technique facilitates the change of unhealthy eating patterns and replaces negative attitudes towards food with healthier ones. Hypnotherapy enables the patients to change their lifestyle because the major causes of overeating are stress, boredom, and seeking solace in foods (Laurence, 2015). This is especially helpful in integrative health where the primary focus is to make appropriate practical changes that would lead to a healthy lifestyle for a longer period.

HYPNOTHERAPY AS COMPLEMENTARY TO CLASSICAL MEDICINE

Over the past few years, there has been a growing trend of combining hypnotherapy with 'standard' mainstream medical procedures, mostly within the scope of integrating medicine and health and wellbeing. The integrated model enables a broader focus on the patient's problems by focusing on the ailment and the psychological elements of the sickness. Hypnotherapy is not intended to be an alternative to other treatments, but to act as an adjuvant in accelerating healing, decreasing the doses of medications, which often have negative side effects, and helping patients cope with side effects.

Cancer Treatment Support

Hypnotherapy has been demonstrated as rather effective in the treatment of side effects of cancer treatments. Chemotherapy or radiation therapy always results in poor side effects including nausea, vomiting, anxiety, or fatigue. The effectiveness of hypnotherapy in managing the above-mentioned symptoms has also been proved when used as an adjunct to a cancer patient's treatment plan.

According to (Richardson et al. 2007) hypnotherapy was recommended for cancer patients mainly because it helped to reduce nausea and anxiety due to chemotherapy. In hypnotherapy, patients are made to relax and make positive suggestions or reinforcement about something to be expected or that has been treated anticipating a positive outcome, which can help patients reduce anticipatory nausea and vomiting as well as post-chemotherapy nausea and vomiting. The significance of hypnotherapy can be compared to the need to reduce patients' psychological concerns while they go through cancer treatment; this is because hypnotherapy positively impacts patients' quality of life hence decreasing the hurdles of the cancer treatment journey.

Further, the patients going through cancer treatment usually suffer from high levels of treatment-related anxiety especially when undergoing procedures like surgeries or staying in

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the hospital for a long time. In the case of surgical procedures, hypnotherapy has shown remarkable efficacy in the reduction of pre-procedure anxiety which makes the patients calm thus minimizing the injection of sedatives or other medications to control their nerves (Montgomery et al., 2000). This kind of support is vital especially in cancer cases since a patient's state of mind has a direct influence over his or her bodily healing and prognosis.

Chronic Pain Management

The other major area of using hypnotherapy in integrative health is to address non-acute pain. In this case, pain is often managed by drugs like opioids which have side effects like addiction and other side effects when administered for a long period. Hypnotherapy can be described as a non-pharmacological and non-surgical form of treatment of pain that has the potential to reinforce the conventional medical treatment plan. Cognitive-behavioral and psychological changes are achieved in hypnotherapy since it helps the patient learn better ways of handling the pain and its physical meaning.

For instance, in patients who suffer from either fibromyalgia or arthritis, hypnotherapy can be applied jointly with the medications to increase the efficiency of pain management while at the same time reducing the required dosage of pain-relieving drugs. (Elkins et al. 2015) identified the effectiveness of hypnotherapy in pain management and demonstrated that the integration of hypnotherapy improved the patients' pain scores drastically. The study also established that those patients who received hypnotherapy had their needs for opioid analgesic dosages reduced which in turn minimized the addiction and side effects of such drugs. This makes hypnotherapy interesting for chronic pain treatment, especially with the emerging issues of opioids, and calls for a more effective and safer way of handling chronic pain treatment.

MODERNISING HYPNOSIS AS A COMPONENT OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Thus, hypnotherapy adopted by mental health professionals as one of the additional approaches to traditional treatment methods including CBT and pharmacotherapy in patients with anxiety, depression, and PTSD. For example, patients diagnosed with GAD may take anti-anxiety medications and undergo CBT and if hypnotherapy is added to the treatment, the patient's emotional coping abilities and stress coping rates are improved (Hammond 2010).

Hypnotherapy on the other hand involves using hypnosis to facilitate patients to access their unconscious mind which is a better place for most of the emotional problems or fears to be dealt with. This way they can help securely manage such thoughts and feelings and therefore have an enhanced mental state. For instance, hypnotherapy can be applied to decrease the impact of PTSD flashbacks or intrusive thoughts in patients with PTSD or to improve patient's mood and positive thinking in patients diagnosed with depression. With the addition of hypnotherapy alongside psychotherapy and medication, the treatment strategies become more complex and personal.

Hypnotherapy and Surgery Preparation

Hypnotherapy is also administered during the preparations of patients for surgery. Most patients suffer from preoperative anxiety, which has an impact on the surgery results and postoperative period. It has been found that the patient who receives hypnotherapy before the surgery will have less anxiety, less pain in recovery, and will even have a shorter length of stay (Montgomery et al., 2000). This is because; hypnotherapy leads to relaxation,

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minimizes negative emotions as well, and enables patients to paint a victory image of surgery and healing thus making the overall experience better.

Applying hypnotherapy for a patient who is to undergo surgery, a patient can get into surgery with reduced emotional stress, which in turn means better results of surgery and less requirement of overuse of pain relievers after the surgery. This integrative approach to surgery preparation fits in the vision of the integrative health model of care which not only focuses on the physical healing processes of the patient but also his/her psychological and emotional states.

This elaborated section also describes how hypnotherapy enhances the traditional forms of treatment in different medical practices, making the management of the patients more comprehensive. The use of hypnotherapy complements the common forms of treatment providing the patients with both psychological and physical gains.

Case Study: Chronic Pain Management

It is thus possible to conclude that the use of hypnotherapy in the treatment of chronic pain diseases including fibromyalgia, has reported high levels of effectiveness in the treatment of the diseases. Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain syndrome with additional complaints of generalized pain, fatigue, and sleep abnormalities, and very much unresponsive to most therapies. In a study of patients with fibromyalgia, hypnotherapy was reported to be especially beneficial in pain relief and improved sleep patterns of the patients, which assertively are two of the most challenging problems faced by the patients.

For this reason, hypnotherapy was aimed at inflicting post-hypnotic suggestions related to pain and sleep, such that patients who underwent only a few hypnotherapy sessions received significant relief from pain; their sleep became much better, other aspects of their several lives improved (Jensen et al., 2017). In addition to the therapeutic changes, hypnotherapy reduced pain by half and improved sleep for the majority of patients at the end of the intervention phase and again at a follow-up three months later for many patients. This means that in addition to the short-term benefits hypnotherapy may lead to long-term positive changes in managing chronic pain conditions. Most importantly, these benefits were obtained without having to use other medication, which underlines that the application of hypnotherapy can benefit from using other integrative pain management approaches.

Through the treatment of the physical and emotional parts of fibromyalgia, a patient can manage the condition thereby improving his/her quality of life. This case study is a rather good example of how hypnotherapy then may be complementary to conventional treatments to help chronic pain.

CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As already pointed out, hypnotherapy has been shown to offer benefits in integrative health but the technique suffers from the following vices and ethical issues that limit its use in the mainstream; One of the major challenges is the lack of faith that is manifested in the level of doctors as well as consumers. Some of them still doubt the effectiveness of hypnosis very often caused by the absence of controlled large-scale trials and a general belief that it is non-scientific or a form of stage hypnosis. This skepticism has slowed down the adoption of hypnotherapy so that we cannot see it being incorporated into somewhat traditional healthcare delivery systems (Lynn et al., 2010).

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Another main difficulty is the absence of common requirements for hypnotherapists and their training and certification. Unfortunately, the standards of qualification to implement hypnotherapy across different regions are not uniform; therefore, there are questions as to the matters of professional competence and the safety of the patient. Such inconsistency in training is a concern in terms of the quality of the treatment as well as the danger of weaker-minded people being treated by individuals who may have little or no clinical experience in hypnotherapy. Thus, it is important to maintain the therapeutic integrity of hypnotherapy to make sure that only qualified therapists practice hypnotherapy to avoid ineffective or worse, unsafe practices.

Also, the change in consciousness that is characteristic of the hypnotherapy sessions raises certain ethical dilemmas regarding the informed consent of the patient. Since patients manipulating themselves during the hypnosis show high suggestibility, they develop high sexual prerequisites for receiving therapy and therefore they should have adequate information about the treatments they are bound to face before turning up for it. This especially focuses on the informed consent between the therapist and the patient and even though the consent is obtained from the patient it is made sure it is voluntary and the patient fully understands the content of what is being consented. Professionals working in such facilities have to follow high levels of ethical standards to withstand any pressure or force on the patient with special attention in cases where the persons may be mentally unable to comprehend their plight (Lynn et al., 2010).

Despite these, the emerging scholarly evidence of hypnotherapy's efficacy points to the fact that with proper institutionalization, professionalization, and validation, hypnotherapy could indeed become a mainstream healthcare practice. To address the current barriers that limit the popularity of hypnotherapy some of the ways include setting up certification standards, and raising awareness that hypnotherapy has scientific backing and that hypnotherapists practice ethically.

This extended segment explores hypnotherapy concentrating on its clinical applications in chronic pain and ethical issues regarding acceptance of hypnotherapy in the medical profession. It stresses the issue of Interoperability along with informed consent issues. The issue has been noted and highlighted to encourage more empirical and theoretical studies as well as ethical standards to promote integration of telehealth, as proposed into conventional clinical practice.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, hypnotherapy stands as a strong weapon within the system of integrative medicine as that connects the physical and the mental aspects and works to eliminate the causes of numerous disorders while supporting the patient's well-being.

Integrated health care presents a tremendous opportunity for hypnotherapy. Due to its balancing effect on stress, management of pain, boosting of emotional health as well as its influence on behavior it is prudent that it should be embraced in enhancing general health. Hypnotherapy is also expected to become a part of regular practice in other ways as clinical data have increased while the practice is still relatively novel. However, these ethical issues and the admission of new entities to conventional medicine require additional consideration in the future.

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Conflict of Interest

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