

Enhancing hypnotic suggestibility with transcranial direct current stimulation

ABSTRACT:

The goal of this project was to investigate the enhancement of hypnotic suggestibility. Studies 1 and 2 applied transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) to left prefrontal cortex in a double-blind, sham-controlled design, in an attempt to increase responsiveness to a hypnotic suggestion for enhanced selective and sustained attention, respectively. These studies produced mixed results although there was clear evidence that suggestion could be used to improve sustained attention. Study 3 investigated the hypnotic response patterns of medium and highly suggestible individuals and identified three distinct patterns. Study 4 was a theoretical critique of contemporary measures of hypnotic responding and provides recommendations for the development of the next generation of assessment instruments. Study 5 found that hypnotic suggestibility is negatively associated with metacognition. This project has a number of implications for the enhancement of hypnotic suggestibility. First, tDCS applied to left prefrontal cortex does not appear to reliably enhance hypnotic suggestibility. Second, high hypnotic suggestibility is characterized by diverse response patterns and the clarification of these patterns will benefit future attempts to enhance suggestibility. Third, contemporary measures of hypnotic responding suffer from significant methodological limitations and thus studies modifying suggestibility using these scales should be interpreted with scepticism. Finally, hypnotic suggestibility is associated with impaired metacognition and thus future research on the modification of suggestibility may benefit from specifically targeting this function.

Keywords

Attention; Hypnosis; Hypnotic suggestibility; Measurement; Transcranial electrical stimulation

Published Work:

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