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# HEALTH NEWS

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## Doctors turn to magic to discover more about the human mind

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From small to big tricks, people usually cannot figure out how they are done. It is that unknown that has caught the attention of some neuroscientists at Barrow Neurological Institute.

Dr. Susana Martinez-Conde explains, “We realized the magicians are the manipulators of conscience and awareness so it just seems so obvious.”

It was so obvious that doctors Martinez-Conde and Stephen Macknik have enlisted the help of several different magicians to discover the brain's mechanisms, underlying attention and awareness.

Dr. Martinez-Conde says, “These magicians and ourselves have got together to try and figure out what type of brain mechanisms may be underlying the magic, but also what principles we may extract from magic techniques that we can then take to the lab to try and understand more about the human mind.”

Those working with the doctors include Raymond Teller from the Penn and Teller duo, Apollo Robbins to Anthony Barnhart aka Magic Tony. The doctors are trying to figure out how magicians use hand movements and laughter to divert the audience from seeing how the trick is actually done.

Dr. Martinez-Conde explains, “To isolate these principals, to make sure we have a pretty good idea of how they're implemented in the normal brain. Once we have that type of baseline, we can then expand it to neuro diseases and attentional deficit.”

Magic Tony admits, “That would be great if what we learned about attention through these sets of experiences can be applied to help people with neurological disorders.”

Magic Tony, who just recently began working with the doctors, gave 3TV an example of how someone might miss the punch line to a trick. He explains, “Memorize card. You can show it to everyone, even me. The six of spades.” He goes on, “It disappeared from the deck. It's no longer there. Do you have any idea where it might have gone? It's in my mouth.” He says, “People who perceive how a trick works and people who don't perceive how a trick works don't show a difference in where they place their eyes, the difference lies in where they've placed their attention.

The doctors believe this collaboration between magician and the medical field can bring endless possibilities. Dr. Martinez-Conde says, “We think this will be a very large field a few years from now.”

If you would like to see more of the doctors' research involving magic, go to the [Barrow Neurological Institute website](#).

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