

## History Spotlight

### In Memoriam

**Samuel LeBaron, PhD, MD (1943-2022)**



**Psychologist/Physician Who Pioneered Hypnotherapy to Reduce Children’s Pain and Other Symptoms and Brought Medicine and Psychology Together**

**in His Research and Teaching**

by

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Dr. Samuel “Sam” LeBaron was a scientist, clinician, and philosopher. He began as a psychologist and studied how a psychological intervention like hypnosis could impact physical symptoms in children. His contributions to child hypnotherapy research are vast and significant. He was unique in his teaching of student clinicians. Initially, as a psychologist in a Department of Pediatrics, he taught medical students about the importance of patients’ beliefs, emotions, and past experiences as contributors to their current symptoms. He realized he needed to learn more about medicine and became a physician where he eventually joined the Family Medicine faculty at Stanford University. There he taught family medicine residents about the importance of understanding patients’ emotions and beliefs as a path towards healing. He always mused on the meanings of well-being and illness, as well as on family relationships. Such musings led to his final published book on the dying experience, his own.

As he began his path, Sam LeBaron was a clinical psychology graduate student at Michigan State University, where pediatric psychologist Robert “Bob” Noll also earned his PhD. Bob did not know Sam at the time since Sam was several years ahead in the graduate program. After graduation, they were introduced to each other through Bob’s clinical work and research in psychological aspects of childhood cancer. Through that focus and a mutual interest in hypnosis, the three of us connected.

I should back up a bit. Sam grew up in Canada and eventually migrated south to the U.S. to study. I (Lonnie Zeltzer) first met Sam when he was a post-doctoral fellow with child psychiatrist Dr. Josephine Hilgard at Stanford University. She was studying the clinical uses of hypnosis for children with cancer and published early research in this field with Sam. Josie was the wife of experimental psychologist Dr. Ernest “Jack” Hilgard who began the early scientific studies to understand hypnosis, beginning work with humans in his pain laboratory. At the same time, I was a fellow in adolescent medicine at the University of Southern California’s Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles (CHLA) and had developed an interest in hypnotherapy for acute pain.

After my fellowship, I moved to San Antonio, Texas, to develop and direct a Division of Adolescent Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. I wanted to set up a pain research program involving hypnosis and visited the Hilgards at Stanford, where I met Sam. I lured Sam and his family to San Antonio where Sam and I created a research program exploring the impact of hypnotherapy in improving children’s symptoms. Sam was not only a good investigator and clinician but also an outstanding teacher of medical students and pediatric residents. He was so good, in fact, that as a clinical psychologist, he was made the director of medical student education in pediatrics.

I think it was this experience that drew him into medicine at age 40 years, and he was accepted into the medical school at University of Alberta in Canada.

Our work paths diverged at that point, although our friendship did not. After medical school, Sam went back to Stanford for his Family Medicine residency and remained on the faculty there until his emeritus status. As he was during his time in San Antonio, Sam was a fabulous teacher of medical students. He continued research in medical education and, with his travels, primary care practices in different populations and cultures.

Sam's connections with Bob Noll developed through meetings of the Children's Oncology Group, where we all had research interests in pain and psychological aspects of childhood cancer. We also were studying the impact of hypnosis on children's symptoms. Sam encouraged Bob to learn more about hypnosis. Bob then used hypnosis to mitigate pain, anxiety, and nausea in pediatric cancer patients. Bob published an article on hypnosis eliminating warts in a pediatric cancer survivor who had successfully used hypnosis to mitigate pain during procedures.

Bob and I both lost contact with Sam until later in 2022 when we learned that Sam was in treatment for stage IV metastatic lung cancer. I had contacted Sam and set up a weekly video call with the three of us that lasted until Sam went into hospice and died in December 2022. In the first call that Sam and I had, he told me about the book that he had just finished writing, after 15 years of writing letters to his two children, Michael and Athena. They later told me that Sam sent many letters to them over the years about his life and philosophy. Over a number of years, material from these letters came together in a book that he had been working on and culminating while he knew he was dying. He asked if I would read the book since much of it was about childhood memories that he discussed with me over the years, as well as experiences during our time together in San Antonio. He mailed the book to me, and we had many long conversations about it. We also discussed the many memories the book brought up of our shared time together.

In our weekly video calls with Bob, Sam, and me, we talked about shared past experiences in pediatric oncology and just spent time together laughing and being with Sam. When Bob and I no longer were able to reach Sam, we assumed that he went into hospice and was more actively dying. We both learned about his death later.

To write this *In Memoriam* about Sam, I realized that I knew little about his scientific life after he went to medical school and Stanford. I did a PubMed search, and the articles I found are listed below. I also did a Google search and found stories online about his book: ***Ordinary Deaths: Stories from Memory, University of Alberta Press, 2022. There was a wonderful "in memoriam" online written by an author at the University of Alberta***

**Press. The article quotes a comment by well-known author Dr. Abraham Verghese, who was on the faculty at Stanford and who Sam had said encouraged him to finish the book and go to his medical school alma mater to see if they would publish it. In that memoriam online, Verghese notes:** “From the moment we are born we begin the journey to our inevitable death, and yet death is something we try not to think about. But from childhood, then as a psychologist, a morgue assistant, a physician, and finally as a patient, Samuel LeBaron has never stopped thinking about death. His unflinching gaze and profound insight, together with his lyrical and even rapturous prose, remind us that life is precious and poignant precisely because it ends. Simply put, *Ordinary Deaths* is extraordinary” ([Abraham Verghese](#), author of *Cutting for Stone*).

*I learned online that Sam took 15 years working on the book and spent 2 ½ years knowing that he was dying from stage IV lung cancer. As writer Deb Cummings wrote in the University of Alberta Alumni News online, “LeBaron’s ability to hold space for the uncertainty, mystery and doubts we have about dying is anything but ordinary.”*

### **Samuel LeBaron, PhD, MD: List of Publications**

#### [Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol \(THC\) as an antiemetic.](#)

1. Zeltzer L, Barbour J, LeBaron S, Kellerman J.  
N Engl J Med. 1980 Jun 12;302(24):1364.  
PMID: 6246423 Clinical Trial. No abstract available.

#### [Neuropsychological assessment of children with medulloblastoma.](#)

2. LeBaron S.  
Biomed Pharmacother. 1982;36(10):405-7.  
PMID: 7184512

#### [Relief of anxiety and pain in children and adolescents with cancer: quantitative measures and clinical observations.](#)

3. Hilgard JR, LeBaron S.  
Int J Clin Exp Hypn. 1982 Oct;30(4):417-42. doi: 10. 1080/00207148208407277.

PMID: 6957402 No abstract available.

[Hypnosis and nonhypnotic techniques for reduction of pain and anxiety during painful procedures in children and adolescents with cancer.](#)

4. Zeltzer L, LeBaron S.

J Pediatr. 1982 Dec;101(6):1032-5. doi: 10. 1016/s0022-3476(82)80040-1.

PMID: 7143158 Clinical Trial.

[The treatment of asthma with behavioral intervention: does it work?](#)

LeBaron S, Zeltzer L.

5. Tex Med. 1983 Jul;79(7):40-2.

PMID: 6353655 Review. No abstract available.

[Effects of the mechanics of administration on doxorubicin-induced side effects: a case report.](#)

6. Zeltzer L, LeBaron S.

Am J Pediatr Hematol Oncol. 1984 Summer;6(2):212-5.

PMID: 6589970 No abstract available.

[Psychosomatic problems in adolescents. Why they occur, how to intervene.](#)

Zeltzer LK, LeBaron S.

7. Postgrad Med. 1984 Jan;75(1):153-64. doi: 10. 1080/00325481. 1984. 11698563.

PMID: 6694923

[A prospective assessment of chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting in children with cancer.](#)

8. Zeltzer LK, LeBaron S, Zeltzer PM.

Am J Pediatr Hematol Oncol. 1984 Spring;6(1):5-16.

PMID: 6711763

9. [The effectiveness of behavioral intervention for reduction of nausea and vomiting in children and adolescents receiving chemotherapy.](#)

Zeltzer L, LeBaron S, Zeltzer PM.

J Clin Oncol. 1984 Jun;2(6):683-90. doi: 10. 1200/JCO. 1984. 2. 6. 683.

PMID: 6726307 Clinical Trial.

[Research on hypnosis in hemophilia--preliminary success and problems: a brief communication.](#)

10. LeBaron S, Zeltzer LK.

Int J Clin Exp Hypn. 1984 Jul;32(3):290-5. doi: 10. 1080/00207148408416018.

PMID: 6490216 No abstract available.

[Behavioral intervention for reducing chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting in adolescents with cancer.](#)

11. LeBaron S, Zeltzer L.

J Adolesc Health Care. 1984 Jul;5(3):178-82. doi: 10. 1016/s0197-0070(84)80039-x.

PMID: 6735833

[Paradoxical effects of prophylactic phenothiazine antiemetics in children receiving chemotherapy.](#)

12. Zeltzer L, LeBaron S, Zeltzer PM.

J Clin Oncol. 1984 Aug;2(8):930-6. doi: 10. 1200/JCO. 1984. 2. 8. 930.

PMID: 6747670

[Assessment of acute pain and anxiety in children and adolescents by self-reports, observer reports, and a behavior checklist.](#)

13. LeBaron S, Zeltzer L.

J Consult Clin Psychol. 1984 Oct;52(5):729-38. doi: 10. 1037//0022-006x. 52. 5. 729.

PMID: 6501658 No abstract available.

[Hypnosis for hemophiliacs: methodologic problems and risks.](#)

14. LeBaron S, Zeltzer L.

Am J Pediatr Hematol Oncol. 1985 Fall;7(3):316-9.

PMID: 2416232 No abstract available.

[Does ethnicity constitute a risk factor in the psychological distress of adolescents with cancer?](#)

15. Zeltzer LK, LeBaron S.

J Adolesc Health Care. 1985 Jan;6(1):8-11. doi: 10. 1016/s0197-0070(85)80096-6.

PMID: 3965419

[Pediatrics and psychology: a collaboration that works.](#)

LeBaron S, Zeltzer L.

- 16.

J Dev Behav Pediatr. 1985 Jun;6(3):157-61.

PMID: 4008662

[Paternalistic vs egalitarian physician styles: the treatment of patients in crisis.](#)

LeBaron S, Reyher J, Stack JM.

- 17.

J Fam Pract. 1985 Jul;21(1):56-62.

PMID: 4009140

[The role of imagery in the treatment of dying children and adolescents.](#)

LeBaron S, Zeltzer LK.

- 18.

J Dev Behav Pediatr. 1985 Oct;6(5):252-8.

PMID: 4066959

[A controlled study of education for improving compliance with cromolyn sodium \(Intal\): the importance of physician-patient communication.](#)

19. LeBaron S, Zeltzer LK, Ratner P, Kniker WT.

Ann Allergy. 1985 Dec;55(6):811-8.

PMID: 3935013 Clinical Trial.

[Assessment of acute pain and anxiety and chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting in children and adolescents.](#)

- 20.

Zeltzer L, LeBaron S.

Hosp J. 1986;2(3):75-98.

PMID: 3643877 No abstract available.

[Hypnosis and hypnotizability: implications for clinical intervention.](#)

Bowers KS, LeBaron S.

21. Hosp Community Psychiatry. 1986 May;37(5):457-67. doi: 10. 1176/ps. 37. 5. 457.  
PMID: 3699712

[Fantasy in children and adolescents with chronic illness.](#)

Zeltzer LK, LeBaron S.

22. J Dev Behav Pediatr. 1986 Jun;7(3):195-8.  
PMID: 3522631 Review. No abstract available.

[Chemotherapy side effects in pediatric oncology patients: drugs, age, and sex as risk factors.](#)

23. LeBaron S, Zeltzer LK, LeBaron C, Scott SE, Zeltzer PM.  
Med Pediatr Oncol. 1988;16(4):263-8. doi: 10. 1002/mpo. 2950160408.  
PMID: 3419392

[Comprehensive care for hemophilia patients in south and west Texas.](#)

Zeltzer PM, LeBaron S, Zeltzer L, Yoken C.

24. Tex Med. 1988 May;84(5):45-50.  
PMID: 3261458 No abstract available.

[Can children understand and use a rating scale to quantify somatic symptoms: Assessment of nausea and vomiting as a model.](#)

25. Zeltzer LK, LeBaron S, Richie DM, Reed D, Schoolfield J, Prihoda TJ.  
J Consult Clin Psychol. 1988 Aug;56(4):567-72. doi: 10. 1037//0022-006x. 56. 4. 567.  
PMID: 3198814 No abstract available.

26. [Assessment of quality of survival in children with medulloblastoma and cerebellar astrocytoma.](#)



LeBaron S, Zeltzer PM, Zeltzer LK, Scott SE, Marlin AE.

Cancer. 1988 Sep 15;62(6):1215-22. doi: 10. 1002/1097-0142(19880915)62:6<1215::aid-cnrc2820620629>3. 0. co;2-c.

PMID: 3409190

[Imaginative involvement and hypnotizability in childhood.](#)

LeBaron S, Zeltzer LK, Fanurik D.

27. Int J Clin Exp Hypn. 1988 Oct;36(4):284-95. doi: 10. 1080/00207148808410519.

PMID: 3209269 No abstract available.

[The role of imagery in the treatment of a patient with malignant melanoma.](#)

LeBaron S.

28. Hosp J. 1989;5(2):13-23. doi: 10. 1080/0742-969x. 1989. 11882645.

PMID: 2793086

[An investigation of cold pressor pain in children \(Part I\).](#)

LeBaron S, Zeltzer L, Fanurik D.

29. Pain. 1989 May;37(2):161-171. doi: 10. 1016/0304-3959(89)90127-9.

PMID: 2748189

[The cold pressor pain paradigm in children: feasibility of an intervention model \(Part II\).](#)

Zeltzer LK, Fanurik D, LeBaron S.

30. Pain. 1989 Jun;37(3):305-313. doi: 10. 1016/0304-3959(89)90195-4.

PMID: 2755712 Clinical Trial.

[American Academy of Pediatrics Report of the Subcommittee on the Management of Pain Associated with Procedures in Children with Cancer.](#)

31. Zeltzer LK, Altman A, Cohen D, LeBaron S, Munuksela EL, Schechter NL.

Pediatrics. 1990 Nov;86(5 Pt 2):826-31.

PMID: 2216645 No abstract available.

[A randomized, controlled study of behavioral intervention for chemotherapy distress in children with cancer.](#)

32. Zeltzer LK, Dolgin MJ, LeBaron S, LeBaron C.

Pediatrics. 1991 Jul;88(1):34-42.

PMID: 2057271 Clinical Trial.

[A workshop on taking a sexual history and counseling on contraception.](#)

Anderson M, Grudzen M, LeBaron S.

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Acad Med. 1995 May;70(5):443-4. doi: 10. 1097/00001888-199505000-00043.

PMID: 7748412 No abstract available.

[Structured student interviews of elders at home during a family practice clerkship.](#)

Thom D, Yeo G, LeBaron S.

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Acad Med. 1995 May;70(5):446-7. doi: 10. 1097/00001888-199505000-00047.

PMID: 7748416 No abstract available.

[Evaluation as a dynamic process.](#)

LeBaron SW, Jernick J.

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Fam Med. 2000 Jan;32(1):13-4.

PMID: 10645507 No abstract available.

[Including the patient in student presentations.](#)

LeBaron S, Schillinger E.

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Fam Med. 2000 Feb;32(2):87-8.

PMID: 10697765 No abstract available.

[The hypnotic dreams of healthy children and children with cancer: a quantitative and qualitative analysis.](#)

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LeBaron S, Fanurik D, Zeltzer LK.

Int J Clin Exp Hypn. 2001 Oct;49(4):305-19. doi: 10. 1080/00207140108410080.

PMID: 11596826

[A seriously playful man: Ernest "Jack" Hilgard's exploration of the unusual.](#)

LeBaron S.

38. Int J Clin Exp Hypn. 2002 Apr;50(2):104-13. doi: 10. 1080/00207140208410094.

PMID: 11939274 No abstract available.

[Barriers to cervical cancer screening in rural Mexico.](#)

Watkins MM, Gabali C, Winkleby M, Gaona E, LeBaron S.

39. Int J Gynecol Cancer. 2002 Sep-Oct;12(5):475-9. doi: 10. 1046/j. 1525-1438. 2002. 01170. x.

PMID: 12366665

[Use of traditional medicine in Mongolia: a survey.](#)

Bernstein JA, Stibich MA, LeBaron S.

40. Complement Ther Med. 2002 Mar;10(1):42-5. doi: 10. 1054/ctim. 2002. 0508.

PMID: 12442822

[The multiple mini-SOAP format for student presentations of complex patients.](#)

Schillinger E, LeBaron S.

41. Fam Med. 2003 Jan;35(1):13-4.

PMID: 12564856 No abstract available.

[Teaching family medicine medical students about sleep disorders.](#)

Schillinger E, Kushida C, Fahrenbach R, Dement W, LeBaron S.

42. Fam Med. 2003 Sep;35(8):547-9.

PMID: 12947515

[Do required preclinical courses with family physicians encourage interest in family medicine?](#)

43. Hill-Sakurai LE, Schillinger E, Rittenhouse DR, Fahrenbach R, Hudes ES, LeBaron S, Shore WB, Hearst N.

Fam Med. 2003 Sep;35(8):579-84.

PMID: 12947521

[Knowledge and beliefs regarding type 2 diabetes mellitus in rural Mexico.](#)

44. Valenzuela GA, Mata JE, Mata AS, Gabali C, Gaona E, Thom D, LeBaron S.  
Ethn Health. 2003 Nov;8(4):353-60. doi: 10. 1080/1355785032000163920.

PMID: 14660126

[Teaching clinical students to teach.](#)

45. LeBaron S, Schillinger E.  
Fam Med. 2004 Feb;36(2):87-8.

PMID: 14872351 No abstract available.

[Can the future of medicine be saved from the success of science?](#)

46. LeBaron S.  
Acad Med. 2004 Jul;79(7):661-5. doi: 10. 1097/00001888-200407000-00009.

PMID: 15234916

[Attitudes toward cervical cancer screening among Muslim women: a pilot study.](#)

47. Matin M, LeBaron S.  
Women Health. 2004;39(3):63-77. doi: 10. 1300/J013v39n03\_05.

PMID: 15256356

[Adherence among Mexican Americans with type 2 diabetes: behavioral attribution, social support, and poverty.](#)

48. Carranza SN, LeBaron S.  
Fam Med. 2004 Sep;36(8):539-40.

PMID: 15343410 No abstract available.

[Family medicine in Iran: the birth of a new specialty.](#)

49. Lebaron SW, Schultz SH.

Fam Med. 2005 Jul-Aug;37(7):502-5.

PMID: 15988644

[Use of traditional medicine by immigrant Chinese patients.](#)

Wu AP, Burke A, LeBaron S.

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Fam Med. 2007 Mar;39(3):195-200.

PMID: 17323211