

**PSYCHOLOGY**

***Placebo Effect***

**By** [**MICHAEL SCHMITT**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/eric_schmitt/index.html) **and [ERIC S. SCHMIDT](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/michael_s_schmidt/index.html%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20MICHAEL%20S.%20SCHMIDT)** NOV. 18 , 2014

 The etymology of the word placebo is derived from the Latin verb for “I shall please,” and in the classical sense, a placebo is an imitation medicine that a doctor gives to calm an anxious patient, or to placate a persistent one perhaps demanding pills the physician is unwilling to administer. A placebo contains no pharmacological substances and therefore strictly speaking, it is not categorized as a medicine. However a patient is led to believe that something more than mere sugar pills is being prescribed to alleviate or even cure a health condition, thus indicating that it has more to do with the power of suggestion coupled with the strength of a patient’s belief in an ultimate recovery.

 Medical practitioners in favor of doing out placebos are certain that more powerful than their actual diagnosis of a patient is the prescription slip containing reassurance to a patient that a particular aliment can be overcome. Studies confirm this conviction by showing that up to 90 percent of patients who seek medical attention are suffering from self-limiting disorders that are well within the range of the body’s own power to heal. Both researchers and physicians who vouch for the virtue of placebos concede that there is still a lot that remains unverified about the psychological power invested by the human mind that causes placebos to work, but clearly the patient’s beliefs and the physician’s attitude both seem to play a key part, including the doctor’s ability to gain the patient’s full confidence in the dummy drug. These are all vital factors in maximizing the performance of a placebo.

According to records on file at the U.S. food and Drug Administration (FDA), 35 percent of patients who have been allotted placebos throughout drug trials claim long-term relief from symptoms, thereby astonishing researchers with this considerable success rate in the fight against disease. Analyses and interpretation of the results indicate that the simple process of administering a placebo without a patient’s prior knowledge has direct and often beneficial results: yet despite what the reports reveal, the majority of medical researchers strongly oppose this practice, suggesting it violates doctor-patient relationships. Medical ethics standards maintain that the notion of trust should be paramount and doctors are expected to convey the truth, but on occasion, some are faced with the dilemma of how to remain wholly truthful to someone undergoing medical supervision while acting in their best interests. A number of researchers have called into question the legitimacy of some doctors’ discretionary tactics used in the treatment of particular cases Misinformation has been reported to work in the opposite direction as in the example where practitioners are tempted to paint a more optimistic picture in order to convince patients indisposed to undertake a more aggressive treatment like chemotherapy, which in retrospect they may not have chosen to submit to had they had access to information about their rate of cancer and their body’s actual condition.

Further studies report of some patients learning that they have been given placebos in place of clinically tested and approved drugs, thus breaching the trust established in their physicians in some cases and inducing the reverse “nocebo” effects to occur in others. This exacerbates further a patient’s medical state and occasionally accelerates causes leading to death. The actual use of placebos in clinical practice has become increasingly uncommon due to possible malpractice suits, and they are almost exclusively used in research where the subjects are now more likely to be advised in advance of the possible risks and benefits of a treatment. Along with this, doctrines and policies are implemented to ensure that informed consent is observed, thus aligning standards for medical research and practice with the need for further investigation into the so-called placebo effect.

1. How many percent of patients have been allotted placebos throughout drug trials claim long-term relief from symptoms?
2. When patients know that they have been given placebos, and the trust between patients and doctors are broken, What can happen?
3. According to paragraph 1, for which of the following reason in a placebo not classified as a real drug?
4. It is not prescribed by a practitioner.
5. It lacks any medicinal ingredients.
6. It does not affect a patient’s health.
7. It merely depends on a patient’s faith
8. The word “alleviate” in the passage is closest in meaning to
9. violate
10. irritate
11. relieve
12. revive
13. The phrase “this practice” in the passage refers to
14. being dispensed with placebos
15. the fight against disease
16. analyses and interpretation of the results
17. administering a placebo
18. The word “others” in the passage refers to
19. studies
20. drugs
21. cases
22. effects
23. According to the passage, because of the threat of litigation, placebos
24. are only used by physicians who take a potential risk of malpractice
25. are required to reduce their anticipated reverse effects on patients
26. are being thoroughly investigated by doctors on their components
27. are rarely administered in direct medical treatment of patients
28. If this wasn’t newspaper article, where would you find this article?
29. Economic magazine
30. Medical Journal
31. Prescription
32. Tony’s diary
33. Now we are going to summarize the text. Fill in the blanks to express the most important ideas in the passage, with three of the selections below.

The use of placebos is a controversial treatment method that appears to be effective in certain situations.

(……)

(……)

(……)

1. Whether a placebo is able to effectively treat a disease is dependent on which substances are included.
2. Despite the desirability of transparency in medical practices, it is difficult for practitioners to share information with patients.
3. Ethical problems arise when a doctor employs a placebo as a medical cure with keeping a patient ignorant of it.
4. Success of a placebo stems from the fact that it seems to positively influence the body’s capability to heal itself.
5. A concern over using a placebo is that it causes patients to believe that their medical condition is not so serious.
6. When patients discover that they have been administered a placebo, adverse reactions occur which are sometimes fatal.
7. If you are a doctor would you use placebo effect on patients? YES/NO? WHY?