Placebo

Placebo is a simulated or otherwise medically ineffectual treatment for a disease or other medical condition intended to deceive the recipient. Sometimes patients given a placebo treatment will have a perceived or actual improvement in a medical condition, a phenomenon commonly called the placebo effect. Placebo effect consists of several different effects woven together, and the methods of placebo administration may be as important as the administration itself.

Placebo and nocebo effects occur in clinical or laboratory medical contexts after administration of an inert treatment or as part of active treatments and are due to psychobiological mechanisms such as expectancies of the patient. Placebo and nocebo studies have evolved from predominantly methodological research into a far-reaching interdisciplinary field that is unravelling the neurobiological, behavioural and clinical underpinnings of these phenomena in a broad variety of medical conditions. As a consequence, there is an increasing demand from health professionals to develop expert recommendations about evidence-based and ethical use of placebo and nocebo effects for clinical practice.

A paper of Evers et al., forms a first step towards developing evidence-based and ethical recommendations about the implications of placebo and nocebo research for medical practice, based on the current state of evidence and the consensus of experts. Future research might focus on how to implement these recommendations, including how to optimize conditions for educating patients about placebo and nocebo effects and providing training for the implementation in clinical practice¹⁾.

1)

Evers AWM, Colloca L, Blease C, Annoni M, Atlas LY, Benedetti F, Bingel U, Büchel C, Carvalho C, Colagiuri B, Crum AJ, Enck P, Gaab J, Geers AL, Howick J, Jensen KB, Kirsch I, Meissner K, Napadow V, Peerdeman KJ, Raz A, Rief W, Vase L, Wager TD, Wampold BE, Weimer K, Wiech K, Kaptchuk TJ, Klinger R, Kelley JM. Implications of Placebo and Nocebo Effects for Clinical Practice: Expert Consensus. Psychother Psychosom. 2018 Jun 12:1-7. doi: 10.1159/000490354. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 29895014.

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