



# Your Own Medicine

The placebo effect has always had a bad reputation in modern medicine. It was pure imagination, calcium tablets and at most one proof that a product did not work. But now seeking doctors, scientists, psychiatrists and psychologists to give it a new and better image. The placebo effect is there and it works, so why not find out how and use it?

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During last spring I experienced from time to time some pretty strong chest pains. The pain went on for some months and was particularly aggressive when I was sleeping or sitting quietly by myself. It might feel as if someone had stuck a knife in the chest on me. Often I had to force the body forward when tightening over the heart region, and for days it felt as if my left arm was asleep. I am an ordinary healthy man in his mid 30s, soon to have two children and a fairly average level of stress, so I found it by no means hysterical to visit my doctor for fear of an incipient heart attack or heart failure. My doctor is a quiet older man, and after a few deep breaths, a cold stethoscope different places on my chest and a blood pressure monitor beeping, he looked earnestly at me.

"Have you taken too many push-ups or trained your chest on one or another new way?"

He has such a special posture, when he has to be serious when he turns his face against the table and looks up at his patient.

"Try to take a break. It is as if you have little muscle in the thoracic region," he said and showed me seriously strained and some stretching exercises, I had to do against a wall before I went to bed and when I stood up. If it still stood on after a few weeks, I had to come back.

I practiced the same evening and again the following morning and then never again. In return, I have not since felt any pain whatsoever in my chest. It disappeared and I had not given it a thought until I recently read that science journalist Michael Specter had experienced something similar question, which he described in an article on the American researcher Ted Kaptchuk. Kaptchuk is one of the world's leading researchers in the placebo effect and has recently opened the world's largest research center for placebo research at Harvard University in the USA. That's when it dawned on me what it was, my doctor had prescribed and what it was that had worked so effectively to me that the physical pain that I really experienced so strong that my body had to give in and my arm was asleep, completely disappeared. It was myself.

Today my doctor denies that he tried to trick me into thinking that I would get well, but he says when I call him.

"Incredibly, many of the things I see go by itself. How is that for many doctors, and if we can find no medical explanation for what would be wrong, and otherwise conducting all necessary investigations, we ask that people often come back. And it is indeed rare, they do it."

## Purification of the placebo

Although my doctor may not have tried to prescribe me pure placebo medication, is there anything to suggest that he could have done it. Over the past 10 years have researchers begun to look at the placebo effect in concentrated form and nothing but the shameful product of a drug test. For placebo had a bad name. It's only been used to reveal the pharmacology ineffective - as an effect that was not there. But just as the technological development work for pharmacology, is also the placebo effect more and more useful in treatment. It is still a mystery, but today we know that the placebo effect exists and that it is more than imagination. We also know that it works better than it ever did. It is a force that is within us and can create changes in the brain, relieve pain, help depression, Alzheimer's patients and Parkinson's sufferers. Scientists worldwide are working hard to shift the understanding of the placebo effect and talking about something that would be laughed at for 20 years ago: Using placebo in treatment. Medical.

"Most people respond positively only to the idea of getting treatment. We have known for years," explains Professor Ted Kaptchuk of Harvard to Information.

"The knowledge we have to take science seriously and work with on a par with other therapeutic agents."

For placebo studies moving "art of medicine" back to the forefront, as Ted Kaptchuk says. This is where we quantify the art of medicine completely scientific.

"This research shows that a large part of the successful recovery and improvements related to the patient's expectations for its cure, doctor-

patient relationship and all sorts of ritualistic parts of medicine. The knowledge can move the entire medical science self-concept. "

At home cand.psyk. and lecturer at the Department of Psychology at the University of Aarhus, Lene Vase among the leading researchers in the placebo effect, and she works with Ted Kaptchuk and Italian neuroscientist Fabrizio Benedetti, who has studied placebo effect through brain scans.

"Patients' expectations and meet systems in general can have a major impact on treatment and medication effects," she says, explaining how the brain scans can see changes in brain activity during placebo effect. The moment people get to know that they get a pain-relieving treatment, there are many who begin to create an expectation of a lower level of pain and it alters brain areas involved in thinking and planning to do. You feel calmer and more relaxed, which activates the emotional areas. These psychological and neurological changes activate the body's own opiodsystem and release endorphins that help against pain.

"Specifically, there will be less painful stimulation, so when people say they experience less pain - so it may be true. It is not imagination. We can look at the brain scan studies. We can measure it. Both psychologically and neurologically - there is simply a modification of the brain. "It is about utilizing the resources that humans have.

### **The separation of body and soul**

The word 'placebo' has always been saddled with a somewhat strained meaning. It is latin and means 'I shall please' and refers to the first verse line from the Psalms, as mourners and monks were set to sing for the dead in the Middle Ages. "I shall please the Lord in the land of the living," he states, and thus became associated with the fake tears and compassion, and with modern medicine's emergence at the end of the 1800s began the word to creep into science. It was around here, people are gradually began to separate body and psyche along in science.

Before then, nobody doubted that the body and psyche were linked. The body could affect the psyche and the psyche could affect the body, it seemed obvious, and there was not a concept of psychosomatic disorders. It was entirely built in the disease concept. At that time there was virtually no real treatment options, and hospitals were mainly used to inspect the sick, isolate them and hope they got better.

But at the end of the 1800s, one discovers the bacteriological diseases and it has permeated the ideal treatment and health system since: we get sick we go to the doctor, we get a pill, we operated, we are healthy. For as the insight into the anatomy became deeper and scientific, demanding patients also scientific answers to medical questions. Antibiotics are science and genuinely - it's not placebo, was the thought.

All it tells PhD in medical history from the University of Copenhagen, Lars Ole Andersen me. It may take a few minutes to locate him among piles of books and papers in his apartment in Copenhagen's northwest quarter, but once you put him in time of illness and placebo story, so he stops not. He has over 20 years studying the placebo effect and published several books on the subject.

"Contemporary understanding of the disease is a journey into the body. First you discover that it may have something of functionality; the cells to do later, it is about what is inside the cells, and today we are very down to nano-particle level when we talk about diseases," he says.

But the diseases we have today is quite different than they were 100 years ago, underlines Lars Ole Andersen, and they require a completely different understanding of the body and the body's relationship to the psyche.

"And this is where placebo research is so interesting. Our biggest problem today is the long-term chronic diseases, and we can not give antibiotics for emphysema, arthritis or spinal lumbar pain. We need to find another form of treatment. The system works optimally on diseases we can cure. We have some reward mechanisms in the health system, dating from the time when we mainly dealt with infectious diseases. "

Like Ted Kaptchuk, Lene Vase and the other researchers involved in this area, it is imperative for Lars Ole Andersen to get wiped away the bad reputation, placebo historically have had and give the status of genuine care and science. Therefore, he suggests also that you completely drop the term and instead just talk about "sansendtryks important for healing."

Because that is basically what this is about, explains Lars Ole Andersen, and most scientists today agree that it plays a significant role in the treatment itself. They know even that medicine's shape and color play a big role in its effect. Yellow pills are very effective against depression, red pills seem exhilarating, and green is effective against anxiety. More pills work better than large, although the dose is the same, injection works even better and best of all works placebo operations - particularly against Parkinson and knee injuries - but it does not so many. You find it unethical.

We also know that the placebo may support the use of pharmacology. Experiments have shown, how the body can learn that a particular drug works, and thus gradually decrease the dose that you give and get the same effect as long as the intake of medicine is the same. Furthermore, studies have determined how much contact with the physician and nursing staff can mean. Thus, Benedetti conducted a study that gave a group of bedridden people analgesic tramol know that a doctor sat at the bedside, established a good contact and told the patient that medication now injected directly. Another group of patients, but the same dose of painkillers, but without first establishing a contact.

The difference in the effect was significant, and the group without contact experience were generally much greater pain.

"It has some doctors of course always done," says Lene Vase. "Today we can prove that it works and it could be worthwhile thinking into healthcare."

### Cheating or not

But the new placebo knowledge opens up a new radical problem. Especially for the likes of me, which of course slowly began to experience chest pain, the more I read about the subject and talked to the experts. Things that I previously found great comfort and relief when I began to doubt, and when I first came across the concept Nocebo, which as the name might suggest, the placebo depressed brother (if you have an expectation that things are getting worse they also like), I was decidedly nervous. For what if you lose faith in themselves or the healing power. But Ted Kaptchuk reassured me somewhat.

"Placebo effect is not in your mind," he explains. "It's in your culture and your experiences. You should see improvement, and it is not you who must change yourself. It's the system."

And Lene Vase also points out, according to the tests that are made - for instance by Kaptchuk - nothing to suggest that you do cheat her body to recover. You can receive treatment even if you possess all the knowledge about the placebo effect, there is. The placebo effect is real.

We have made a major study in the U.S. , which has given people the placebo medication, which they have a really good effect. After you have told the subjects that the pill was made of sugar, but also show them with scans and diagrams on how good the effect. Right after they made exactly the same studio, with exactly the same patients, and it turned out that one could achieve exactly the same level:

"The point is that you explain to people that they have not been cheated, but that they have used their own resources."

### A showdown with the system

I occasionally frequents a fiendishly clever acupuncturist who can help with everything from insomnia, skin problems, stress and pregnancy, but when Ted Kaptchuk told me about his own background, I was again uncertain. Although today he is a professor of medicine, he has a past as an acupuncturist, and it was here that his interest in the pl that time, he experienced again and again how people thanked him for being cured them. Diseases that his needles were not related to and whose cure he could only as contact with the client. It was not the needle. It was the man whom he describes it.

But my acupuncturist took the accusations very calm when I talked to her about it l hair and calm movements. She looks you straight in the eye and not remove his eye look at, comfortable to be bolted.

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#### Original Text:

»Placeboeffekter er et velkendt fænomen i hele healer-ve enhver, der ernærer sig som terapeut eller arbejder med h sundhed, vil jo gerne tro, de gør en forskel.

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"For me it's about what the body is capable of. What the body can by its own power, and that's it, I help it along," she said. We have forgotten our own body, she explained, and lost confidence in it, and it has health care system too.

"Basically it's about love," she said.

"It may sound a little pompous, but I think that's what this is about. That you do not have time to man and do not create the relationship."

It might sound like a view that could only occur in the so-called alternative medicine, but since I have a few days later, speaking with a hardboiled science woman - a specialist in psychiatry, a PhD student at Aarhus University Hospital Lone Fjord Back -'s message surprising identical. She studies yoga and mindfulness healing properties of modern diseases such as chronic stress. And for her it's basically also about love. The relationship between the patient and the system and the relation to himself and his loved ones.

"I teach people to have better relationships with themselves and others. I teach them to relate more empathetic," she says. "And it helps them. We can see that."

Lone Fjord Back says that she sees patients literally can not walk up stairs, when they come to her because of their stress level, but who learns to balance their stress levels and brain in such a degree that they come back to an ordinary life.

"It's about how you relate to other people," she explains.

"About to do it so well that it is reminiscent of an intimate love relationship. Being able to create a contact, which opens another - if one could create the love relationship, it will be healing. There is a big challenge for the health system here, but in the long run it could save both time and money."

But as Lene Vase puts it:

"We could get really far with that thought in relationships, establishment of contacts and work more actively with the patient's expectations for the system .."

### **No miracles**

No serious placebo scientists believe in miracles, assures Lars Ole Andersen. There is no one who researches of hands and holy springs, and he rejects altogether the new knowledge opens up a new discussion about alternative treatments and miracle men. Neither Ted Kaptchuk sees his research as an endorsement of the alternative medicine, but concedes that it can be difficult to separate things along.

"Placebo Effects is a well known phenomenon throughout heal the world, but anyone who makes a living as a therapist or working with healing and health, often want to believe they are making a difference. That's what they've learned, "he says.

"But if people take off guard a little, I think the placebo effect can give us the clarity that once and for all states that it is rarely the tool, but the craftsman who is it important for healing. For some it is a single realization, for others it is not, but it seems we both within the alternative and the established system. "

But the question that has weighed heavily on the side since I first read about Kaptchuks results, missing the researcher remains to find answers to:

- How do you get carried this knowledge into treatment and into the established system?

"It's something I wonder a lot about. I'm really struggling with it. I'm really struggling. "

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