



ADVANCES IN PLACEBO EFFECTS

A TALK BY
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MAGGIO
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EDIFICIO EX-FIAT
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Efforts to estimate the power of placebo have been hampered by the implicit assumption that there is a unitary placebo effect. There is not one placebo effect; there are many. Placebo effects can be powerful or powerless depending on the color, dose, strength of the active treatment, branding, price, mode of administration, and the condition being treated.

Psychological mechanisms underlying the placebo effect include Pavlovian conditioning, expectancy, and the therapeutic relationship. Because the placebo effect is a component of the response to active treatment, these mechanisms can be used to enhance treatment outcome. Also, contrary to received wisdom, placebo treatment can produce meaningful effects even when placebos are given openly without deception.



Irving Kirsch, PhD, is Associate Director of the Program in Placebo Studies and lecturer in medicine at the Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. He is also Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Plymouth (UK), and University of Hull (UK), and University of Connecticut (US). He has published 10 books and more than 250 scientific journal articles and book chapters on placebo effects, antidepressant medication, hypnosis, and suggestion. He originated the concept of response expectancy.

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