What is the Placebo Effect?

This psychological effect occurs when an agent is used to make the patient or participant believe that they are receiving treatment or relief, but the agent is actually inactive.

Evolution of the Placebo

The basic concept has actually been around for centuries.

Example: Ancient belief in healing by a copper bracelet

But the theory is the same today: Mind over matter. Placebos trick the mind based on our expectations.

Psychology

Placebos work on the psychological level. Studies show that they work by using a participant’s expectations to alter results.²

Physiology

Placebos also affect physiological responses. Research shows how heart rate, for example, can be affected because of the expectancy associated with the placebo and its assumed activity.³

Evolution of Placebos:

John Haygarth: first to use the placebo-controlled trial.¹

H.K. Beecher: first to acknowledge importance of placebo and confirm that it is a powerful therapeutic agent.¹


*All images were obtained from www.googleimages.com.