

The Power of the Mind

Extract from World Research Foundation

The Power of the Mind & the Promise of Placebo

<http://www.wrf.org/alternative-therapies/power-of-mind-placebo.php>

Overlooked by its critics in this discussion, is the fact that studies that have utilized placebos have produced some rather remarkable, and at the same time unexplainable, results. Rather than looking at it as a nuisance, we should be looking at the placebo as a key to ascertain a remarkable phenomenon that seems to be a part of the human psyche.

“Psychologist Bruno Klopfer was treating a man named Wright who had advanced cancer of the lymph nodes. All standard treatments had been exhausted and Wright appeared to have little time left. His neck, armpits, chest, abdomen, and groin were filled with tumors the size of oranges, and his spleen and liver were so enlarged that two quarts of milky fluid had to be drained out of his chest every day. Wright heard about an exciting new drug called Krebiozen, and he begged his doctor to let him try it. At first the doctor refused because the drug was being tried on people with a life expectancy of at least three months. Finally the doctor gave in and gave Wright an injection of Krebiozen on Friday, but in his heart of hearts he did not expect Wright to last the weekend.

“To his surprise, on the following Monday he found Wright out of bed and walking around. Klopfer reported that his tumors had ‘melted like snowballs on a hot stove’ and were half their original size. Ten days after Wright’s first treatment, he left the hospital and was, as far as his doctors could tell, cancer free. When he entered the hospital he had needed an oxygen mask to breathe, but when he left, he was well enough to fly his own plane at 12,000 feet with no discomfort.

“Wright remained well for about two months, but then articles began to appear asserting that Krebiozen actually had no effect on cancer of the lymph nodes. Wright, who was rigidly logical and scientific in his thinking, became very depressed, suffered a relapse, and was readmitted to the hospital. This time his physician decided to try an experiment. He told Wright that Krebiozen was every bit as effective as it had seemed, but that some of the initial supplies of the drug had deteriorated during shipping. He explained, however, that he had a new highly concentrated version of the drug and could treat Wright with this. The physician used only plain water and went through an elaborate procedure before injecting Wright with the placebo.

“Again the results were dramatic. Tumor masses melted, chest fluid vanished, and Wright was quickly back on his feet and feeling great. He remained symptom-free for another two months, but then the AMA announced that a nationwide study of Krebiozen had found the drug worthless for the treatment of cancer. This time Wright’s faith was completely shattered. His cancer blossomed anew and he died two days later.”

(Bruno Klopfer, *Psychological Variables in Human Cancer*, *Journal of Prospective Techniques* 31, 1957, pp. 331-40.)