

Being well received in care speeds up healing process

June 6 2013

A placebo can activate a number of biological mechanisms in the same way that medicine can, which is why we are now beginning to understand why a placebo can heal and alleviate symptoms. Psychosocial factors, such as words or how a person is received, can help to heal or bring relief. These findings are being presented by the Italian researcher Fabrizio Benedetti, who is the keynote speaker at the PNIRS 20th Scientific Meeting in Stockholm on Thursday, June 6.

Benedetti has studied the [biological mechanisms](#) behind the placebo effect. This research reveals that placebo is a complex phenomenon that can be achieved with the help of several different underlying mechanisms. The [biological functions](#) that can contribute to the placebo effect may involve [expectation](#), anxiety, or rewards.

"Besides showing that placebo is a genuine phenomenon, Benedetti's research explains the mechanisms that make it work," says Mats Lekander, professor at the Stress Research Institute, Stockholm University, and the Karolinska Institutet, who is hosting the PNIRS 20th Scientific Meeting. Thanks to Benedetti's research, we have a better picture of how the brain can anticipate and trigger events that we expect will take place – for example, forthcoming [pain relief](#).

Research of great clinical importance

Research on placebo for pain relief and Parkinson's disease has

contributed a great deal to our understanding of how multiple neurochemical processes can lie behind a [placebo effect](#). The same mechanisms that are activated by a medicine can be activated by a placebo.

"Together with researchers in Sweden, among other countries, Benedetti thus shows that psychosocial factors, such as words or therapeutic rituals, affect [biochemical processes](#) that can help to heal or bring relief. Ultimately this research is therefore of great clinical significance," says Mats Lekander.

International conference gathers world-leading researchers and Nobel laureates

Psychoneuroimmunology, a research field that targets the interplay between the brain, the immune system, and psychological functions, is the focus of the international conference held in Stockholm June 6–8. The conference brings together 250 researchers from all over the world, many of them world leaders in their research areas, in Stockholm to present their latest findings at the 20th PNIRS Scientific Meeting.

Provided by Stockholm University

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