

**Thank you for participating in this survey!**

*Please read this first:*

Research and clinical experience show that each treatment situation consists of two parts that can contribute to the patient's symptom relief; sometimes described as specific and non-specific treatment effects.

The **specific treatment effect** is the effect obtained by, for example, the surgical procedure performed to alleviate pain, or an analgesic drug.

The **non-specific treatment effect** is the effect that can be attributed to, for example, the communication between patient and physician, where knowledge, expectations, hope and motivation are shaped.

In this study, we are primarily interested in your views and experiences of the non-specific treatment effects in your work as a physician.

Please answer the following questions based on your everyday clinical work. Your answers will be treated completely anonymously, reported as group statistics and used for study purposes only.

**PART 1: CASE STUDY**

A patient with long-term back pain has been deemed to have such pronounced problems that surgery is necessary. The patient has been examined by a physician who will also perform the surgical treatment. The patient gained great confidence in the physician and have also heard that this particular physician has extensive experience and professional skills in performing this procedure. A few days before the surgical procedure, the patient is informed that the physician who was supposed to perform the operation has fallen ill and that a different physician will now perform the procedure. The patient becomes hesitant at first, but when the health-care staff mentions that this doctor has just as much experience and is just as skilled, the patient agrees, and the operation is performed the following day.

**1. Do you think that the situation described above can affect the treatment result?**

Check all that apply from the list below:

- Has no effect at all, because the physicians have the same experience and professional skills.
- Has an effect, because the patient will feel uncertainty about the operation. Even if the health-care staff said that the two physicians were equally skilled, the patient can never really know.
- Has an effect, because the personal encounter and the confidence the patient got in the first physician is valuable.
- Other

Please specify:

## **PART 2: NON-SPECIFIC TREATMENT FACTORS IN SURGERY**

By *specific treatment factors* we refer to the specific surgical procedure that is performed to treat symptoms.

By *non-specific treatment factors*, we refer to the context in which the treatment is performed, such as the patient-clinician interaction, expectations and motivation.

### **2. Do you think that non-specific factors play a role in surgical treatment of patients?**

- Yes
- No

If you answered "No" to question 2, go to PART 3.

If you answered "Yes" to question 2, please answer the following questions:

### **3. Which of the following factors do you think affect the treatment outcome?**

(you can check several options)

- That the physician conveys positive expectations
- That the patient believes in the treatment
- That the physician believes in the treatment
- The relationship between physician and patient
- That the physician listens with interest
- That the physician has a confident and firm handshake
- That the physician conveys calm and confidence
- That the physician looks well-groomed
- That the physician gives the patient eye contact
- That the treatment room looks clean and tidy
- Good care from other health-care professionals
- The ritual surrounding the surgical treatment
- Other

Please specify other:

### **4. Do you sometimes deliberately use non-specific treatment factors in your work with patients?**

- Yes
- No

### **5. If you answered "Yes", which non-specific treatment factors have you sometimes used deliberately?**

(you can check several options)

- Communicate positive expectations regarding treatment outcomes
- Listen with interest
- Positive social interaction
- Confident and firm handshake
- Communicate calm and confidence
- Look well-groomed
- Ensure that the treatment room looks clean and tidy
- Give the patient eye contact
- Other

Please specify other:

**6. On the whole, how much of the total treatment effect in surgery do you think depends on the specific effect of the surgical procedure (i.e. not explained by non-specific treatment effects such as social interaction or expectations)?**

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%

**7. How would you describe the information you provide to your patients regarding the expected outcome of the planned surgical treatment? Check all options you think apply.**

- Involves positive expectations
- Hopeful
- Calming / wish to reduce any anxiety
- An accurate description of risks / health benefits
- Complete honesty
- Other

Please specify other:

**8. How often do you perform surgery that you think may have a placebo component, i.e. part of the positive treatment effect can be attributed to non-specific factors such as patients' expectations?**

- Regularly (> 1 per week)
- Often (> 1 per month)
- Sometimes (> 1 per year)
- Rarely (<1 per year)
- Never

### **PART 3: DEFINITION OF PLACEBO**

**Please respond to these statements regarding your view of the definition of placebo:**

**9. Do you agree with the following definition of placebo?**

"The term placebo refers to a treatment that objectively does not have an intended specific effect, but where an improvement occurs because the patient believes in the treatment and expects a positive effect "

- Agree
- Disagree

Possible comments:

**10. Do you agree with the following definition of placebo surgery (also called sham surgery)?**

"The term placebo surgery refers to a treatment in which patients undergo a surgical procedure that mimics genuine therapeutic surgery but where the essential therapeutic manoeuvre is omitted."

- Agree
- Disagree

Possible comments:

**11. What mechanisms do you think underlie a placebo effect? (you can check several options)**

- Psychological
- Physiological
- Natural history
- Regression to the mean
- Positive energies
- Conditioning
- Unexplained factors
- Other

Please specify other:

**12. Do you think that the placebo effect is true (i.e. has a scientific basis)?**

- Yes
- No

**13. Do you think that placebo has a therapeutic benefit?**

- Yes
- No

## **PART 4: PLACEBO CONTROLLED STUDIES IN SURGERY**

To gain knowledge about the effect of a treatment, there is sometimes the need to compare a real treatment with placebo treatment. This is the gold standard for the evaluation of, for example, analgesic drugs, but not as common in the evaluation of surgical treatment aimed at pain relief.

Please respond to these statements regarding your views on placebo surgery in clinical trials:

**14. Placebo surgery can only be used if there is no other effective treatment to compare the new the treatment with.**

- Agree
- Disagree

**15. Placebo surgery can only be used if the placebo group later receives the genuine treatment ("crossover").**

- Agree
- Disagree

**16. Placebo surgery can only be used if there is no risk of injury (e.g. risk of general anesthesia) for patients in the placebo group.**

- Agree
- Disagree

**17. Placebo surgery can only be used in research that treats symptoms that are not directly life-threatening.**

- Agree
- Disagree

**18. Placebo surgery can be performed in studies when there is uncertainty about a genuine specific treatment effect.**

- Agree
- Disagree

**19. In your opinion, what can be problematic when using placebo surgery in studies? (several options can be checked)**

- The patient is deceived
- Placebo surgery has no effect
- Patients' trust in physicians can be affected
- Side effects may occur (for example during general anesthesia)
- Ethical considerations
- Other

Please specify other:

**20. Do you think that in some cases it can be ethically permissible to perform placebo surgery in clinical practice, given that there is research showing positive results of placebo surgery that can even be superior to genuine surgery sometimes?**

- Yes
- No

**21. Would you personally be willing to refer patients to a placebo-controlled surgical trial?**

- Yes
- No

**22. Do you think there are surgical treatments performed that has no specific effect of the surgical procedure, but is only due to the placebo effect?**

- Yes
- No

Possible comments:

## **PART 5: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Finally, please answer these questions about yourself, and your work:

**23. Gender:**

- Man
- Woman

**24. Your age:**

**25. Number of years since MD license:**

**26. How many years have you worked as a physician? (approximately)**

**27. How many days a week do you work at the clinical practice? (round off in half days)**

**28. How many patients do you treat on average per week? (approximately)**

**29. What is your current area of expertise?**

- Orthopedics
- General surgery
- Other

Please specify other:

**30. If you answered Orthopedics what subspecialty?**

- Back
- Knee
- Shoulder
- Hand
- Hip
- Other

Please specify other:

**31. In which type of institution do you work?**

- Private
- Public

**32. Where do you work?**

- City
- Small town
- Small community/countryside

**Thank you very much for participating in this survey!**