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Pekka Louhiala

Placebo Effects: The Meaning of Care in Medicine

 Springer

Pekka Louhiala
University of Helsinki
Helsinki, Finland

University of Tampere
Tampere, Finland

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Preface

I do not remember exactly when and how I became interested in placebos and placebo effects. The first paper on these topics was a short essay for the Finnish Medical Journal in 1995. When I look at it now, I feel slightly embarrassed. In that essay, I made the same common mistake that I criticise in this book: I did not make a clear distinction between the *use of placebos* and *placebo effects*. Maybe this observation is a sign of progress. And if I'm alive after 20 years, I will probably feel embarrassed for some parts of this book as well.

One discussion I remember very clearly took place in a seminar about 15 years ago. I have forgotten the main topic of the seminar, but somehow we ended up in a discussion about placebo effects. My old friend and colleague Raimo Puustinen commented that the essence of a placebo effect is the patient's *experience of being cared for*. This was not an exact definition of a placebo effect, but I realised immediately that he had said something very important.

During the following years, Raimo and I have had numerous discussions about placebos and placebo effects, often ending in agreement but sometimes also in disagreement. The idea of replacing the term placebo effect with *care effect* came originally from Raimo, and we developed it together in a few scientific publications. The title of this book is based on Raimo's suggestion as well.

I am also grateful for many other people for inspiration and challenge. Martyn Evans, Harri Hemilä, Eija Kalso, Ted Kaptchuk, Hasse Karlsson and Daniel Moerman have in different ways contributed to the process that led to this book. Numerous students and colleagues have commented on my lectures or seminars on these issues, and Signe and Ane Gyllenberg Foundation has supported my work. I'm grateful to them.

Last year my father found a cardboard box that had been untouched in his home for decades. Among other interesting things, the box contained a set of offprints of my uncle Heikki Kalliola's medical publications from the late 1950s and the early

1960s. One of the publications was titled “Placebo effect in peptic ulcer and other gastrointestinal disorders”. My uncle had passed away the year before, and I never had the chance to discuss these things with him. The moment I saw his paper was, however, touching. The story continues.

Hämeenlinna, Finland
June 2019

Pekka Louhiala

Part of the Text Builds Upon the Following Papers, and Both the Co-authors and the Publishers Have Given Their Permission for the Use of the Papers

Louhiala P, Puustinen R. Rethinking the placebo effect. *Medical Humanities* 2008;34:107–109.

Louhiala P. The ethics of the placebo in clinical practice revisited. *J Med Ethics* 2009;35:407–409.

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Louhiala P, Hemilä H, Puustinen R. Impure placebo is a useless concept. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 2015;36:279–289.

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