

Article Critique: Placebo Effects and the Common Cold: A Randomized Control Trial by
Barrett et al. (2011)

The article under analysis discusses the psychological effect of placebo pills on medical conditions of individuals. The research has proved that there is no significant statistical difference between patients taking Echinacea pills and those who take placebo medicine (Barrett, et al. 2011, p. 312). In this context, it is possible to state that people's psychological perception and awareness have a potent impact on their physical condition. There is a direct connection between mental processes and biological changes. Such an assumption is logical because a human organism is a balanced interaction between physical processes and psychological development. Additionally, the research under analysis introduces a fresh insight into the evident link between scientific discoveries and empirical findings.

With regard to the topics discussed in the article, specific attention should be given to the influence of blind treatment on participants' awareness of the very idea of the medical help. Although participants took pills and anticipated the evident improvement, their expectations were predetermined by the information given to them at the beginning. According to Comer (2010), people's assumptions about certain phenomena are mostly predetermined by the generally accepted opinion in society (p. 4). This persuasion is especially influential when it comes to treatment and social acceptance. In medical spheres, people are convinced that, if they take pills, there will be improvements. However, the article at issue does not provide the evident difference between those who undergo treatment and those who endure illness without taking pills.

People suffering from physical disorders and illnesses provoked by the common cold are mentally dependent on the stereotypical ideas about how treatment should be carried out to recover. This topic is carefully considered both in the studies by Barrett et al. (2011, p.

319) and in the theoretical assumptions by Commer (2010, p 6). What is more important is that the book highlights the negative effects that societal norms have on people's behavior. Under certain circumstances, the beliefs imposed on people are often shared among larger groups, although most of them do not have sufficient scientific grounds.

With regard to the above-presented discussions, there are a great number of topics, problems, and controversies that could be discussed. In particular, due to the fact that the article refers to the practical issues and statistical data, the research intends to present new ideas, concepts, and assumptions that will further be developed into the theories and conceptual frameworks. However, it is still not clear whether scientific discoveries in empirical areas seek to strengthen the theoretical base. At the same time, there is also the question about scientific discoveries and how they contribute to the practical spheres. As a proof, Stricker and Trierweiler (1995) insist, "if science and practice are regarded as activities – research and praxis – then there may be fundamental incompatibilities between the two" (p. 996). In this respect, there is a generalizability gap between these spheres, which makes it difficult for theory and practice to cooperate.

There are a number of implications provided by the article for future research studies. To begin with, the emphasis should be placed on learning the nature and origin of psychological abnormalities and deviations because most of the placebo effects on the participants are predetermined by their inadequate perception of treatment. Second, it is necessary to reconsider the concept of psychological norm accepted in society because it distorts individual's perception of how certain psychological and mental deviations could be treated.

In conclusion, the article under analysis shows the connection between psychological effects on people's physical health. Specifically, it refers to practices which support the ideas that taking pills can comfort people who are concerned with their illness. For this reason,

some people believe that taking pills can help them avoid depressive disorders, which is also considered as a psychological abnormality. The article has implications for considering accepted beliefs about individuals' psychological state.