



PRURITUS

PLACEBO AND NOCEBO EFFECTS IN DERMATOLOGICAL CONDITIONS: RECENT EVIDENCE AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Andrea Evers ⁽¹⁾

*Leiden University, Health, Medical and Neuropsychology Department, Faculty of Social
Science, PO Box 9555, Leiden, Netherlands ⁽¹⁾*

Increasing evidence demonstrates the neurobiological underpinnings and relevance of placebo effects for dermatological conditions. For example, physical complaints, such as itch or pain, can be effectively altered by placebo effects, due to induction of expectations of a possible beneficial treatment outcome ("Pain already reduces when seeing the painkiller"). The same is true for nocebo effects which are induced by expectations of a possible unfavorable treatment outcome or side effects. In addition, placebo mechanisms also play a role for immune functioning through pharmacological conditioning. In the presentations, recent results will be presented to demonstrate the evidence for placebo and nocebo effects in dermatological conditions as well as innovative methods to induce or change placebo and nocebo effects. The results have direct implications for the treatment of dermatology patients. Treatment outcomes might be optimized by using both conscious and automatic strategies of optimizing expectancy effects, for example, by applying conditioning principles for therapy adherence, adding environmental cues to the preferred outcome strategies or replacing regular pharmacological treatments partly by expectancy interventions.

