

‘Sham surgeries’: Placebo effect could be harnessed for good

Seen through different eyes, the process of modern surgery may look more more spiritual than scientific, said orthopedic surgeon [Stuart Green](#), a professor at the University of California, Irvine. Our hypothetical patient is undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery, and the rituals he'll participate in — fasting, wearing a hospital gown, undergoing anesthesia, having his surgical site prepared with an iodine solution, and giving himself over to a masked surgeon — foster an expectation that the procedure will provide relief, Green said.

These expectations matter, and we know they matter because of a bizarre research technique called sham surgery. In these fake operations, patients are led to believe that they are having a real surgical procedure...but the doctor does not actually perform the surgery.

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Sham surgeries may sound unethical, but they're done with participants' consent... A [2014 review](#) of 53 trials that compared elective surgical procedures to placebos found that sham surgeries provided some benefit in 74 percent of the trials and worked as well as the real deal in about half.

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Could the placebo effect be harnessed for good? When I posed that question to [researcher [Jonas Bloch Thorlund](#) of the University of Southern Denmark], his answer was a resounding no. Even sham surgery could pose the risk of serious, life-threatening complications. “I don’t think it’s ethical,” he said.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Surgery Is One Hell Of A Placebo](#)