



From Placebo to Panacea: Putting Psychiatric Drugs to the Test

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FROM PLACEBO TO PANACEA

With the latest generation of psychoactive drugs, has pharmacology at last triumphed over mental illness? A close look at world scientific literature would suggest otherwise. The sobering truth is that many claims about the efficacy of drug therapies for everything from depression to schizophrenia have been exaggerated. What, then, accounts for the inflated confidence clinicians and the lay public alike often have in the new generation of "wonder drugs"? Find out in *From Placebo to Panacea*.

From Placebo to Panacea is not an indictment of drug therapy. Rather, it is a reasoned analysis of the efficacy of psychoactive drugs as compared to other forms of treatment--backed by hard empirical data. Above all, it is meant to function as a therapist's and patient's guide to making more informed decisions when considering treatment options.

The book begins with an in-depth discussion of salient problems with standard methods of measuring the usefulness of psychoactive drugs. Next is an exploration of a wide range of factors that can bias test results, both technical (e.g., patients participating in double-blind trials can usually tell whether they are receiving an inactive placebo or a psychoactive drug) and psychosocial. Also considered are problems arising from current systems for diagnosing mental disorders, including complications resulting from comorbidity.

Subsequent chapters focus on drug therapies for specific disorders in both adults and children. The authors cover depression and bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, borderline personality disorder, attention deficit, and hyperactivity. Each chapter carefully considers the published findings on the disorder under discussion, as well as questions of side effects, suicide, and potential long-term benefits.

A final chapter synthesizes the findings from previous chapters into a comprehensive picture of the current state of psychoactive drug therapy. Throughout, the book provides valuable suggestions for ways of improving and building upon existing knowledge.

Offering an empirically based appraisal of the strengths and limitations of drug-based treatment for psychiatric disorders, *From Placebo to Panacea* is must reading for psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals, as well as psychopharmacologists and drug development researchers and patients.

"The long list of treatment failures, ranging from insulin coma to lobotomy, speaks for itself . . . skepticism should prevail with respect to all evaluations of research, particularly if they involve the welfare of large numbers of persons."--Seymour Fisher and Roger P. Greenberg

Is the new generation of psychoactive "wonder drugs" really as effective as it is purported to be? And, perhaps most significant, in an age of managed care, what are the dangers of uncritical faith in the usefulness of these drugs? *From Placebo to Panacea* examines these questions. It separates fact from fiction, and injects a note of healthy questioning into the otherwise unreserved chorus of praise for psychotropics. *From Placebo to Panacea*:

- * Examines the clinical research into outcomes of common drug therapies for most major mental disorders in adults and children Offers analyses of the effectiveness of most common psychotropics in both controlled trials and clinical settings
- * Explores technical and psychosocial factors that frequently bias test results in favor of drug therapies
- * Provides critical, empirically based appraisal of the strengths and limitations of drug-based treatment for psychiatric disorders
- * Compares the relative effectiveness of drug therapy versus nondrug therapies and placebos

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