

SCHIENLE, Anne

Disgust Regulation via Placebo

Whereas pain researchers have studied effects of placebos for a long time, their influence on emotional processing has hardly been investigated. The present fMRI study analyzed whether placebo treatment can change disgust feelings. Disgust-prone women underwent a retest design where they were presented with disgusting, fear-eliciting and neutral pictures once with and once without a placebo (inert pill presented with the suggestion that it can reduce disgust symptoms). The placebo provoked a strong decrease of experienced disgust, which was accompanied by reduced activation of brain regions implicated in intero/exteroceptive processing (insula, visual cortex). Moreover, the placebo altered the functional connectivity of the mentioned brain regions. The findings suggest that placebo use can modulate a specific affective state and might be an option as a first therapy step for clinical samples characterized by excessive and difficult-to-control disgust feelings.