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**Subject:** The placebo effect  
**Date:** Sun, 11 Nov 2018 13:00:02 +0000

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Greetings -

Here's a fascinating article from the *NYT Sunday Magazine*: "[What if the Placebo Effect Isn't a Trick?](#) — New research is zeroing in on a biochemical basis for the placebo effect — possibly opening a Pandora's box for Western medicine." Definitely worth reading in its entirety. It details a rich history of the placebo and the *why* behind double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trials. Intriguingly, a central subject in the story, Ted Kaptchuk, hypothesizes that "the placebo effect is a biological response to an act of caring; that somehow the encounter itself calls forth healing and that the more intense and focused it is, the more healing it evokes."

Pair Kaptchuk's observation with Atul Gawande's recent article in the *New Yorker* ([Why Doctors Hate Their Computers](#)), where he wonders if digitization and computer screens are coming between doctors and patients. "We ultimately need systems that make the right care simpler for both patients and professionals, not more complicated," Gawande writes. "And they must do so in ways that strengthen our human connections, instead of weakening them."

There's much more to both stories to ponder than the snippets above, but I find it intriguing that both make a case that the human connection between doctor and patient is something not to be taken for granted (or minimized by technology).

- Peter

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