THE POWER OF PLACEBO
By Michael Brooks
Muse Magazine

Answer the following questions in complete sentences. You will be graded according to the distributed Weekly Science Article rubric.

1. What is a placebo? _____________________________________________________
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2. Diazepam, or Valium, is an actual medication that is prescribed regularly around the world. Why is it considered to be a placebo in some ways?
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3. Approximately 35 to 45 percent of all prescriptions written by doctors today are for placebos. Are all of these prescriptions for sugar pills? If not, what are the doctors prescribing?
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4. Why would a doctor write a prescription for something that he/she knows is a placebo?
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5. Explain the nocebo effect.
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6. “Blind” testing means that the randomized controlled trial of drug, the patients in the study do not know whether they are receiving the actual medication or the placebo. What does “double blind” testing mean, and why is it so important in drug trials?

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7. When a doctor prescribes a placebo to a patient, he/she is requesting that the patient take a pill that the doctor knows will not have any effect on the health of the patient. Do you think that offering placebos is an ethical form of healthcare management? Is it fair to the patient? State your opinion and your reasoning in a minimum of four complete sentences in a cohesive paragraph.

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