**Manuscript evaluation guidelines**Title: Perception and Practice of Placebo Use among Physicians in Mangalore  
  
  
1. *Importance of the paper*  
           Does it address issues relevant to the fields of bioethics and medical ethics in the developing countries?

The topic itself is hugely important from an applied ethics point of view. However, there has not been much attempt to make an ethics discussion and therefore does not address the ethical issues in a way that should be present in an ethic journal  
  
2. *Is it topical?*  
           Is the issue discussed from another country's/culture perspective? - No  
  
           Will it influence practice or policy? – It may influence practice but unfortunately, the write up style and flow lacks the foundation for this.  
  
           Is it too specialized for the journal? – It is not too specialized though it does deal with one aspect of therapeutic practice  
  
3. *Originality*  
           Is the information /comment new? – there have been quite a few studies on placebo effect both abroad and in India (as mentioned in the discussion)

Is there any likelihood of plagiarism? – not sure since I do not have plagiarism software  
  
  
4. *Conclusions*  
           Is the interpretation warranted, unwarranted, well developed? – there has been little attempt to make interpretations and this is unfortunate since many of the findings warrant interpretation and clear messaging for the readers,  
  
           Does the article contain loose generalisations? – Generally the term ‘ placebo’ has been used. However the term placebo is usually defined as an inert substance which is designed not to have a therapeutic value. Therefore it’s difficult to say the medicines studied in this study are actually placebos. Instead, what is probably meant is that they are medicine used for a placebo effect  
  
           Are there any important omissions?

There is a frequent mention of pure and impure placebos. These need to be defined and described early on.

The discussion is loose and lacks coherence and direction.

The conclusion is missing.  
  
  
5. *Other comments*

* *I find that this paper is written rather haphazardly and without a clear direction.*
* *The topic is important, but some of the basic definitions of placebo need to be looked at.*
* *The sample size and sampling is too localized and therefore interpretations are not really generalizable.*
* *Further, there are other papers in India and abroad bringing out the same findings.*
* *The results tables are many and need to focus on the important findings.*
* *The discussion lacks clear direction and very few interpretations have been made.*
* *There has been no attempt to have an ethical debate on placebo use or placebo effect in medical practice.*
* *This should ideally have been the emphasis of the paper for it to be of value in an ethics journal.*  
    
  6. *Recommendation*  
   Accept as is  
    
   Accept with modifications (specify)  
    
   - style

- substance  
  
I am not sure whether in its present form the manuscript is acceptable for publication.  
  
7*. Separate comments for the author*

*Title: Adequate*

*Abstract:*

*Introduction:*

1. *You have mentioned that a placebo is not just an inert substance but ‘can also be an active substance with a beneficial effect in an unexpected manner’. You have provided a reference, but the reference is a commentary and also mentions placebo effect and not placebo. Kindly provide an authoritative reference which conclusively states that placebos have an effect since most definitions mention that they are an inert substance not designed for any therapeutic value.*
2. *The terms pure and impure placebos are mentioned. These terms have not been introduced in this section and need to be defined with reference so that the reader has a clear idea what is meant.*

*Subjects and Methods:*

*1. How many private clinics were taken? This is not mentioned. What was the proportion of physicians between hospitals and clinics?*

*For sample size collection, what is meant by 88%? Is it use of placebo? If so, were the contexts similar?*

*Results:*

*What was the method of sampling for choosing hospitals, clinics and physicians?*

*It would be important to list out common placebos used ie pure and impure so that the results are clear as to whether the participants were able to discern the true meaning of placebo.*

*The tables are quite a few and it is important to choose the really important tables or integrate into fewer.*

*Discussion:*

1. *First para – it mentions that 72% of physicians prescribed placebos. Are they placebos or medicines for placebo effect?*
2. *Third para – the frequency of ‘placebo’ use is mentioned as once a week, once a month, or once daily? Does this depend on the frequency of visit to the doctor, or based on prescriptions instructions? If the latter, how is once a month possible?*
3. *Eighth para – it says ‘Other commonly prescribed placebos were antacids (41.9%), antibiotics (22.6%), oral analgesics (21%), saline solution injections (17.7%) and ointments and bandages used in conditions without any visible damage to the skin (17.7%).’ – Can these drugs, especially analgesics or antibiotics be classified as placebos?*

*The discussion is more or less the results written in a comprehensive manner. The discussion needs to be more directed rather than a narrative of results with some comparison of other studies here and there. Try to bring in a flow and build up the message.*

*There is not much discussion on the ethics of using placebo.*

*Conclusion: This is missing and is needed to bring in some firm take home message for the reader and recommendations,*

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N.B. **Please let us know whether you would like your name to be published as a reviewer of the manuscript. This is optional.**

I would prefer that my name is not published as a reviewer of this manuscript.