

From: [Llew Mills](#)
To: [Robby Berman](#)
Subject: RE: Request for Comment from Healthline Media
Date: Thursday, 16 February 2023 12:15:00 PM

Hi Robby

Happy to

See my responses to your questions below. A couple I was unsure what you meant. Happy to answer follow-ups

1. What is new about this study?

We found an open-label placebo caffeine withdrawal reduction effect. So we gave heavy coffee drinkers (3 or more cups per day) who had gone without caffeine for 24 hours decaf. One group we lied to and said it was caffeinated coffee, the other we told the truth and said it was decaf. The group we lied to had a sizeable reduction in their caffeine withdrawal. But surprisingly the group we told the truth to also reported a reduction in their caffeine withdrawal, although not as large as a reduction as the group we lied to.

2. What would qualify as an “unconvincing” cup of decaf?

One that does not taste like caffeinated coffee. We used a very good brand from the US called Major Dickason's, from a company called Peet's. Despite Sydney folks being notorious coffee snobs our participants were pretty easy to trick.

3. To what extent do you feel a coffee drinker's expectations play a role in the value of decaf when switching?

Not sure what you mean by 'value'. Can you elaborate?

4. Since many of the health benefits of coffee also exist in decaf, do you feel their presence contributes to reducing withdrawal symptoms?

Not sure what health benefits you mean. Can you be more specific?

From: Robby Berman <robbie.berman.email@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, 16 February 2023 8:38 AM
To: Llew Mills <llew.mills@sydney.edu.au>
Subject: Request for Comment from Healthline Media

Dear Dr. Mills,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Robby Berman, and I'm a freelance writer for the *Medical News Today/Healthline* global news team. [Medical News Today](#) is a medical news website with 100 million unique visitors each month, and [Healthline](#) is the no. 1 health media company in the world.

I'm writing to you because I'm currently working on an article for *Medical News Today* about your study regarding the placebo effect of drinking decaf for people trying to quit coffee. I'm hoping to include some comments from you in my article.

My deadline is tomorrow at 7pm, Feb. 16, EST.

I wonder if you have time to, and would kindly respond to a few questions:

1. What is new about this study?
2. What would qualify as an “unconvincing” cup of decaf?
3. To what extent do you feel a coffee drinker’s expectations play a role in the value of decaf when switching?
4. Since many of the health benefits of coffee also exist in decaf, do you feel their presence contributes to reducing withdrawal symptoms?

Of course, if there are other aspects of your study you’d like a chance to comment on, you’re most welcome to do so.

Many thanks in advance for your time, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best,
Robby Berman

P.S. I successfully quit drinking two cups of coffee a day last January, using the grain beverage Inka as my replacement. I found a similar effect: its warmth and its darkness seemed to fool me, and I didn’t have any of the usual coffee withdrawal complaints, happily.