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UNDERSTANDING THE NOCEBO EFFECT CAN HELP OPTIMIZING TREATMENT OUTCOMES WITH BIOSIMILARS

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Many theories have tried to explain the well-known PLACEBO effect of some inactive ingredients as an outcome of patient's expectations. The expanded use of generics and now the increasing use of biosimilars have brought a new definition to the attention of clinicians who tend to describe the correlation between negative expectations or negative communications with negative subjective treatment outcomes as the NOCEBO effect, a phenomenon that can cause the induction or the worsening of symptoms by sham or active therapies may account for some adverse events (AEs) reported by patients following treatment. Nocebo responses may occur as unintended result of the requirement for healthcare professionals to explain possible complications and side effects when initiating treatment. Misleading or over negative communications may set negative expatiations at the patients' level which may ultimately trigger negative perceptions of treatment outcomes and a tendency to overreport adverse events and to withdraw from treatment regimens. Proper fact-based explanations by health care professionals coupled with strategies to reassure and engage patients upon initiating or switching to a biosimilar is a key in ensuring better treatment outcomes and sustainability on biosimilars to ensure broader access for patients to complex biologics and reduce the financial burden on health care systems.

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