

1 **Alternative medicine**

2 original at

3 <http://www.economist.com/node/18710090>

4 Alternative medicine is big business. Since it is largely unregulated,
5 reliable statistics are hard to come by. However, the estimated industry's
6 value around the world is about \$60 billion.

7 Yet, according to the "Guide to Complementary and Alternative Medicine",
8 around 95% of the treatments that have been statistically examined — in
9 fields as diverse as acupuncture, herbal medicine, homeopathy and
10 reflexology— are statistically indistinguishable from placebo treatments.
11 In only 5% of cases was there either a clear benefit above and beyond a
12 placebo, or even just a hint that something interesting was happening to
13 suggest that further research might be warranted.

14 Conventional medicines must be shown to be both safe and efficacious
15 before they can be licensed for sale. That is rarely true of alternative
16 treatments. These rely on a mixture of appeals to tradition and to the
17 "natural" wholesomeness of their products to reassure consumers. That
18 explains why, for instance, some homeopaths can market treatments for
19 malaria, despite a lack of evidence to suggest that such treatments work.

20 Despite this lack of evidence, and despite the possibility that some
21 alternative practitioners may be harming their patients, there is
22 something that conventional doctors can usefully learn from the
23 chiropractors, homeopaths and Ascended Masters. This is the therapeutic
24 value of the placebo effect, one of the strangest and slipperiest
25 phenomena in medicine.

Questions

- 1) Why are reliable statistics regarding alternative medicine hard to come by and what does 'come by' (line 5) mean?
- 2) Explain the meaning of 'industry' (line 5) within the context of the article.
- 3) What does, according to the article, science tell us about the result of alternative medicine?
- 4) Give synonyms and antonyms for 'benefit' (line 11)
- 5) What is the difference between alternative and conventional medicine in terms of market placement?
- 6) What can conventional doctors learn from their alternative counterparts?
- 7) Explain, in your own words, what the 'placebo effect' is.
- 8) What is your opinion on alternative medicine? Do you agree with the article that it is just about the placebo effect? Or is there, in your opinion, something more? Do you think that public health insurance should also apply to alternative treatment?

Vocabulary

according to (line 7) – as shown something or said by someone

warranted (line 13) – justified, reasoned or sanctioned

efficacious (line 14) capable of having the desired result or effect; effective as a means, measure, remedy, etc.

harming (line 21) – inflicting physical injury or mental damage; hurting

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

