Molecular Genetics and Mechanisms of the Placebo Response

Dr. Kathryn T. Hall received her PhD in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics from Harvard before spending 10 years in the biotech industry tackling problems in drug development, first at Wyeth (now Pfizer) and then at Millennium Pharmaceuticals (now Takeda), where she became an Associate Director of Drug Development. Returning to Harvard in 2010, Dr. Hall completed a Fellowship in Integrative Medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and a Master’s in Public Health. Presently an Assistant Professor of Medicine, Dr. Hall conducts innovative research with a collaborative team at Harvard Medical School’s Program in Placebo Studies. One area of focus is the enzyme COMT (catechol-O-methyltransferase), which metabolizes biogenic amines and estrogen, with pleiotropic effects on physiology, pathology, and treatment responses. She identified a polymorphic variant of COMT as one of the first genetic markers of the placebo response. Her work has led to the coining of the term "placebome", which was added to Jargonwatch by WIRED magazine in 2015. Her research has been the focus of numerous articles including features in Science, The Atlantic, The Economist and Discover magazines.

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