

Rethinking psychiatric drug treatment

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Drug treatment in psychiatry is premised on the unspoken and unproven assumption that drugs work by targeting underlying brain diseases or abnormalities. An alternative view that psychiatric drugs are psychoactive substances that work by inducing abnormal or altered brain states can equally well account for the changes in mental symptoms that drugs can sometimes produce. In this seminar we will consider the various psychoactive effects induced by different psychiatric drugs and assess how these effects might help or harm people with various kinds of psychological distress and disturbance. We will explore the way in which viewing drug treatment in this light might influence clinical practice and relations between psychiatrists, patients and drugs.