



ANOMALISTIC PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH UNIT INVITED SPEAKER SERIES 2007/08

*Details: Tuesday 16/10/07 at 4pm in Room 308, Richard Hoggart Building,
Goldsmiths College, University of London, SE14 6NW.*

Dr Brian Hughes

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Making Sense of Miracle Cures: How Psychology Makes Alternative Medicine ‘Work’

“Complementary and alternative medicine retains considerable popularity despite there being little or no empirical evidence of any reliable therapeutic effect. Many people who use complimentary medicine appear to infer its efficacy from the very fact that many other people use it too. In healthcare, however, popularity is rarely a guide to efficacy: research in the psychology of medicine has repeatedly shown that consumers:

(a) base their perceptions of medicines more on psychosocial factors than on technical outcomes (b) are prone to misattributing causality to inert interventions; and (c) manifest various physiological responses to care that can result in actual or perceived recovery (the so-called placebo effect).

This lecture will present an overview of the relevant research literature, as well as some illustrative primary data, and will argue that the placebo effect is just one of several psychological phenomena that lead to complimentary medicine’s undeserved reputation as a useful source of medical treatments.”

For further information, contact:

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