

Is Laughter the best medicine or any medicine at all?

Abstract:

Background: Humor has been strongly promoted as health-giving throughout medical history, from Hippocrates to Sir William Osler. As science became dominant in medicine, subjective therapies like love, faith, and humor took a backseat because of the difficult task of objectively investigating their value. Objective: To highlight the benefits of humor as a medical therapy. Materials and methods: Review of literature identified through Medline Entrez-Pubmed search. Results: Laughter increases the secretion of the natural chemicals, catecholamines and endorphins that make people feel good. It also decreases cortisol secretion and lowers the sedimentation rate, which implies a stimulated immune response. Oxygenation of the blood increases, and residual air in the lungs decreases. Heart rate initially speeds up and blood pressure rises; then the arteries relax, causing heart rate and blood pressure to lower. Skin temperature rises as a result of increased peripheral circulation. In addition, laughter has superb muscle relaxant qualities. Humor is also an excellent antidote to stress and an effective social lubricant. Conclusion: Laughter has many clinical benefits, promoting beneficial physiological changes and an overall sense of well-being.