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We Feel as Good as We Think We Do

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 October 22nd, 2010, 06:47 GMT | By [Smaranda Biliuti](#)
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Macarena De los Santos Roig, at the department of Social Psychology and Methodology of Behavioral Sciences of the University of Granada, along with study leader, professor Cristino Pérez Meléndez, have developed a new test that is able to quantify and assess the cognitive representation that chronic patients make of their disease, in other words, what they think about it.

155 patients with Type 1 diabetes took part at this study, while they were treated at the Department of Endocrinology of the University Hospital San Cecilio, Granada.

They were given several tests and the researchers say that even if they method focused on people with diabetes, it can actually work for anyone with a chronic disease.

The results showed that the patients attitude affected them physically: those who reported many symptoms, who believed their disease had a major impact on their lives and who had difficulties being in control, were in worse physical, psychological and social condition than others; they also had a poorer mental health, less vitality and a worse physical health in general.

On the other hand, when these patients have the feeling that the disease has far less impact on their lives, they face it in a more active way: they express their emotions, they look for social support and apply behavioral coping.

A cognitive representation of a disease is the beliefs and the ideas that patients have about their condition, at a given time, and these ideas are usually based on five things: symptoms, causes, impact of the disease on their lives, way and measures for controlling it and time-line and progression of the disease.

It's all a matter of 'common sense' say the researchers, and by this they want to emphasize that patients are not doctors, they are not medical experts.

The way that patients perceive an illness is based on their own experience, on self-knowledge or on other sources like family, friends, environment, health center and so on.

This is why the researchers say that "the idea that patients have of their disease affects their own coping and adaptation to it," [AlphaGalileo](#) reports.

This research is a step forward in developing better clinical psychological treatments, that should be more efficient than those currently.

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