



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Cutting prescriptions for over the counter drugs affects the poorest in society

Citation for published version:

McKinstry, B 2018, 'Cutting prescriptions for over the counter drugs affects the poorest in society' BMJ, vol. 361, pp. k1874. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.k1874

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1136/bmj.k1874](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k1874)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

BMJ

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.





LETTERS

SIXTY SECONDS ON ... DANDRUFF

Cutting prescriptions for over the counter drugs affects the poorest in society

Brian McKinstry *professor of primary care ehealth*

Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH16 4UX, UK

Ending prescriptions for conditions like dandruff,¹ athlete's foot, and mouth ulcers because people can buy them readily over the counter may seem like an easy win. But not everyone can buy these treatments readily. Universal credit amounts to less than £75 (€86; \$105) a week. Are we really going to force the very poorest in society to give up a substantial amount of their limited income or expect them to live with flaky scalps and itching toes? Even £5 is a lot for people in this situation. Those who pay prescription charges in England will choose to buy over the counter because it is cheaper. The poor are exempt from these charges. This seems a sensible way to keep things.

Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, says that we should “think like a patient, act like a taxpayer.” We should also think with some humanity.

Competing interests: None declared.

1 Kmiotowicz Z. Sixty seconds on ... dandruff. *BMJ* 2018;361:k1557. 10.1136/bmj.k1557 29636331

Published by the BMJ Publishing Group Limited. For permission to use (where not already granted under a licence) please go to <http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions>