

Greater access to information reduces unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions

23 January 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A new study in the *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy* suggests that providing more information about how doctors prescribe drugs could reduce problems associated with overprescription.

In 2016 the National Health Service described the resistance to [antibiotics](#) as "one of the most significant threats to patients' safety worldwide." Antibiotics are often the go-to prescription for many primary care cases, but researchers estimate that as much as 23% of these [prescriptions](#) could be inappropriate. Higher antibiotic consumption can lead to drugs becoming ineffective at combatting infections.

In 2013 the Chief Medical Officer for England presented a 5-year plan to combat this. One part of this plan is a publicly funded service creating a website that provides doctors with prescribing data by practice and by month.

Five years on from the initiation of this [strategy](#), researchers set out to determine if there was a measurable impact from the antimicrobial resistance strategy on overall antibiotic prescribing

in England.

Researchers calculated the volume of antibiotic prescriptions using annual prescription data from 1998 to 2016, and monthly prescribing data from October 2010 to June 2018. After several years with a stable rate of antibiotic prescribing, there was a downward change after 2013. There was then a decrease of 14% in the number of antibiotic prescriptions between 2012 and 2017. This was against a background of increasing population size.

Though researchers cannot firmly attribute causality for the reduction in prescribing to the strategy, the researchers here believe that the magnitude and timing of the changes are noteworthy. The substantial change followed a long period of relatively static antibiotic prescribing.

"We are delighted to report a substantial shift in practice, starting in 2013, with 9.7 million fewer prescriptions in the past year than would have been expected at pre-2013 trends" said one of the researchers, Ben Goldacre, "however there is still much work to be done on disseminating best practice."

More information: "Chief Medical Officer Activity on Prescribing of Antibiotics in England - An Interrupted Time Series Analysis" *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy* (2018). DOI: [10.1093/jac/dky528](https://doi.org/10.1093/jac/dky528)

Provided by Oxford University Press

APA citation: Greater access to information reduces unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions (2019, January 23) retrieved 16 November 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-01-greater-access-unnecessary-antibiotic-prescriptions.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.