



## LETTERS

## "FIT NOTES" AND GP TRAINING

# Sick certification by general practitioners is an unethical conflict of interest

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Rimmer reports that "fit notes" may become part of general practitioner training in England.<sup>1</sup> I had my primary training in the Netherlands, where sick certification was assigned to social security and occupational physicians. It was considered an unethical conflict of interest as the treating physician should be dedicated to the cause of the patient, not the cause of an employer, insurer, or government authority.

The Dutch Medical Association still says that treating physicians should not offer advice on fitness for work or issue attendance certificates for employment purposes.<sup>2</sup> It is not only unethical, but GPs do not have the training, knowledge, or expertise to do this (unremunerated) work competently. It places another penalty on general practice in areas of social deprivation, on top of all

the arguments forwarded by Torjesen on why extending certification duties is another bad idea.<sup>3</sup>

Competing interests: I am a GP.

- 1 Rimmer A. "Fit notes" could become part of GP training, says deputy chief medical officer. *BMJ* 2018;363:k4214. doi:10.1136/bmj.k4214.30291152
- 2 KNMG (Royal Dutch Medical Association). What is the role of the treating physician in fitness for work. <https://www.knmg.nl/advies-richtlijnen/artseninfolijn/praktijkdilemmas-1/praktijkdilemma/heb-ik-als-behandelend-arts-een-rol-bij-arbeidsverzuim.htm>
- 3 Torjesen I. GPs should lose long term sickness certification role to new agency, review concludes. *BMJ* 2011;343:d7645. doi:10.1136/bmj.d7645.

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