



LETTERS

COMPLAINTS

Fear of complaints

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White suggests that doctors who don't declare any complaints might be saying "yes" to patients when they should be saying "no."¹ When I delivered a training session on antibiotic prescribing to local GPs, they said unanimously that antibiotic prescribing was too high. But there was a striking change in tone when I asked what they could do to reduce prescribing. Responsibility immediately shifted to "the government" and "patients." A repeatedly voiced theme was that patients would complain if not provided with antibiotics. Challenging their patients was simply out of the question. Research confirms that this finding is not unique to Birmingham. In one survey the vast majority of patients who requested antibiotics for respiratory

tract infections were prescribed them.² I agree that saying "no" to patients is part of professional practice. It is what distinguishes professionals from the retail industry.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 White DA. We need complaints. *BMJ* 2019;364:l648. 10.1136/bmj.l648.30755393
- 2 McNulty CA, Nichols T, French DP, Joshi P, Butler CC. Expectations for consultations and antibiotics for respiratory tract infection in primary care: the RTI clinical iceberg. *Br J Gen Pract* 2013;63:e429-36. 10.3399/bjgp13X669149. 23834879

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