



## EDITORIALS

# Wrapping *The BMJ*

We have switched to greener alternatives

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Readers of the print BMJ may notice something different about this week's copy. It arrived in a more environmentally friendly wrapper. Like many of you, we are concerned about the environmental impact of the print journal, and the plastic wrapper has been an increasing focus of complaints from readers. Many readers are rightly passionate about protecting the environment and want to see that we are working to produce the journal in a sustainable way. We realise that if *The BMJ* is to advocate for more sustainable healthcare we must continuously work to get our own house in order.

With these concerns in mind, we have spent many months considering a range of options, and this week we are using two new wrappers: paper and a carbon neutral recyclable plastic. We initially considered a potato starch material, but not everyone in the UK can dispose of this in an environmentally friendly way. So we have turned instead to paper as the most environmentally friendly option for our largest print distribution, which goes out to hospital doctors and academics. The recyclable paper wrapper is sustainably produced using paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Our smaller print distribution goes out to GPs and retired doctors, and paper wrapping is not yet feasible for these copies. Instead we have chosen what we believe to be the next best thing: a polymer derived from the waste products of sugar cane processing. Though this remains a single use plastic wrapping, it is made up of 75% biological material, is recyclable in plastic recycling collections, and has been certified as carbon neutral by the Carbon Trust. We will send all copies in recyclable paper as soon as this is feasible.

## Paper trail

As well as improving the way the journal is wrapped, we continue working to ensure that it is printed on the most environmentally friendly paper. The paper we use comes from offcuts and thinnings of trees harvested from sustainably managed forests. The harvested trees are used by the Swedish home building industry instead of environmentally damaging materials such as concrete and cement. By buying the offcuts we are helping to make sustainable construction more financially viable.

Roughly a quarter of *The BMJ*'s paper comes from forest thinnings—young trees identified as unlikely to produce construction grade timber and removed to leave more space for healthier specimens. The remaining three quarters comes from waste chips and shavings produced during the manufacture of construction ready timbers. New paper created in this way can be recycled up to seven times. The paper mills producing *The BMJ*'s paper reduced their use of fossil fuels by 80% in the past decade by moving to energy from hydroelectric sources and renewable biofuel, half of which is generated on-site at the mill.

Do let us know what you think of the new wrapper. And, if you prefer to read the weekly issue on your smartphone or tablet, our mobile app is available to BMA members and BMJ subscribers from the Apple App Store or Google Play.<sup>1</sup> BMA members and BMJ subscribers can also, of course, read the full version of all our articles online on bmj.com.

We will continue to explore more sustainable options for printing and wrapping *The BMJ* as part of our commitment to reducing our impact on the environment. You can read our coverage of the health effects of the climate emergency, of the important contribution that hospitals and healthcare can make to reducing carbon emissions and environmental pollution, and our recent collection on divesting from fossil fuels.<sup>2-5</sup> Your comments and contributions on all of these issues, and on the new wrapper, are welcome.

Competing interests: We have read and understood BMJ policy on declaration of interests and have no interests to declare

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- 1 About The BMJ app. <https://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/bmj-app>
- 2 Salas RN, Jha AK. Climate change threatens the achievement of effective universal healthcare. *BMJ* 2019;366:l5302. 10.1136/bmj.l5302 31548271
- 3 van Hove M, Leng G. A more sustainable NHS. *BMJ* 2019;366:l4930. 10.1136/bmj.l4930 31375505
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- 5 Stott R, Smith R, Williams R, Godlee F. Schoolchildren's activism is a lesson for health professionals. *BMJ* 2019;365:l1938. 10.1136/bmj.l1938 31043365

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