Summary points

Switching of prescription drugs to over-the-counter availability is increasingly common

The classes of drug available over the counter are expanding to include those used for prevention of serious illness

The main motives are pharmaceutical firms’ desire to expand their market, attempts to reduce drug bills, and the self care movement

Contributors and sources: All authors conduct research into how drugs are developed. JPC’s main area of interest is pharmaceutical reimbursement and he is senior research associate at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. JPC was responsible for article content, survey design, acquisition of sources and data, analysis and interpretation of sources and data, drafting of the manuscript, and critical revision of the manuscript. CP participated in writing the article, acquisition of sources and data, analysis and interpretation of sources and data, and critical revision of the manuscript. CPC participated in writing the article, analysis and interpretation of sources and data, and critical revision of the manuscript. CPC is guarantor.

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Learning as a team

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The most interactive case history is on avoiding drug error in primary care. There are many causes of drug error, but the most common one is breakdown in communication between doctors and patients and other members of the primary care team. Our learning module explains why this happens and how to put in place procedures to stop it happening. It is not just about learning communication skills: the module also points out recent changes to prescribing information in Britain, such as the new advice that risperidone and olanzapine should be avoided in patients with dementia as they increase the risk of stroke in such patients. To find out more about avoiding drug error in primary care, try our new learning module on bmjlearning.com.

Kieran Walsh editorial registrar, BMJ Learning (bmjlearning@bmjgroup.com)

Corrections and clarifications

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