The Recovery—a podcast about action for sustainable healthcare

Cochrane Sustainable Healthcare and The BMJ are launching a pop-up podcast series, featuring conversations with people finding new and sometimes radical approaches to wind back medical excess and make health systems healthier in the long run

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The way we currently practice medicine is unsustainable for patients, healthcare systems, societies, and the planet. It is estimated that a fifth of what we do in healthcare is not needed. All those unnecessary tests, treatments, and diagnoses bring direct harm to people through adverse effects of drugs and surgeries, psychosocial harms of labelling, and increasing the burden of treatments. Since resources for healthcare are finite, waste is also harming patients indirectly because the overuse of some medical interventions means there are fewer resources to tackle underuse and underdiagnosis in other areas. Moreover, when healthcare spending grows, as it is doing everywhere, resources are drawn from other societal sectors which can improve public health far more effectively than interventions within healthcare. Considering the substantial carbon footprint from health systems themselves, medical waste also increases harm to the planet.

The drivers of unsustainable healthcare are complex and diverse, and solutions should be guided by reliable and robust evidence which is built based on considerations of equity. The related crises of climate change and medical excess mean our evidence ecosystem needs to adapt to support more sustainable decision-making within healthcare. We urgently need to find out how to efficiently and safely wind back the tests, treatments, and diagnoses causing people more harm than good. Doing this will produce a win-win by also helping our transformation to a de-carbonised healthcare system.

To help promote this transformation The BMJ has joined forces with Cochrane Sustainable Healthcare to launch a new podcast called The Recovery. It will feature compelling and inspirational conversations with those actively working to wind back medical excess and forge a more sustainable healthcare system. From Mumbai to Minnesota, you will hear the latest stories about saving money, it is about avoiding harm to people and the planet. We hope this podcast series will inspire listeners all over the world to imagine novel and radical approaches for a more sustainable healthcare, and to dare to move from imagination to action.

The Recovery is co-hosted by Fiona Godlee and Ray Moynihan, and available at https://sustainablehealthcare.cochrane.org/podcast-recovery

Please visit Cochrane Sustainable Healthcare’s website for more information about the podcast and their work.

Competing interests: MJ is a member of the Scientific Committee for the Preventing Overdiagnosis Conference. FG: As Editor in Chief, FG has led The BMJ’s campaign on Too Much Medicine (https://www.bmj.com/too-much-medicine) and overseen the journal’s series of articles on Overdiagnosis (https://www.bmj.com/specialties/too-much-medicine) and other content aiming to address the issue of medical overuse. She is an Ambassador for the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change, a Trustee of the Eden Project, and a member of the

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The Recovery—"a podcast about action for sustainable healthcare" was published in The BMJ on 14 November 2021. The text is from the lead article about the podcast series. The podcast series features conversations with people finding new and sometimes radical approaches to wind back medical excess and make health systems healthier in the long run. The Recovery is a co-hosted podcast by Fiona Godlee and Ray Moynihan. The article discusses the unsustainable nature of current medical practice, the need to find more efficient and safe ways of delivering healthcare, and the importance of evidence-based decision-making. The podcast series aims to inspire listeners to imagine and implement new approaches to healthcare that are more sustainable and less harmful to patients and the planet.
Board of the Preventing Overdiagnosis Conference. These roles are unremunerated. RM is an adjunct associate professor at the University of Sydney. He has co-hosted The Recommended Dose podcast, produced by Cochrane Australia, and co-promoted by The BMJ. He is a founder of the Preventing Overdiagnosis conference.

Provenance and peer review: Commissioned, not peer reviewed

1. OECD. Tackling Wasteful Spending on Health. OECD Publishing, 2017; doi: 10.1787/9789264266414-


