Why *The BMJ* will no longer report on unsubstantiated press releases

Kamran Abbasi editor in chief

When do you say enough is enough? Doctors and other UK public sector workers have concluded that time is now, in a pay dispute that will turn a long hot summer into an autumn and winter of discontent (doi:10.1136/bmj.01859, doi:10.1136/bmj.01868, doi:10.1136/bmj.01872, doi:10.1136/bmj.01873).

Workforce pressures and staff burnout are at unprecedented levels (doi:10.1136/bmj.01866, doi:10.1136/bmj.01976).

NHS restructuring is understandably met with “change fatigue” (doi:10.1136/bmj.01769). The effect on staff manifests in worse outcomes and frustrating experiences for patients, the self evident logic of which seems to escape the people in power. “If you want a picture of the future,” wrote George Orwell in 1984, “imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever.”

It seems Orwell was imagining health services in 2022. The positive focus on health at the start of the covid pandemic is now replaced by policy makers telling us that covid is over when it isn’t (doi:10.1136/bmj.01779, doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-069558).

Or that it is just flu, even when new estimates suggest that, among the many non-flu-like sequelae of covid, long term smell and taste dysfunction may be affecting around 5% of people (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-069503, doi:10.1136/bmj.01653).

The war in Ukraine and the climate crisis in the cost of living are being used as a pretext to renege on climate commitments and boost fossil fuel extraction, when what is needed is a redoubling of effort on tackling the climate crisis and faster progress, such as on air pollution targets (doi:10.1136/bmj.01664).

The modern world is ruled by expediency and populist manifestos and soundbites. Experts, at least people with knowledge and expertise, are banished or the well trodden path of harm from overdiagnosis and faster progress, such as on air pollution targets (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-069558).

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