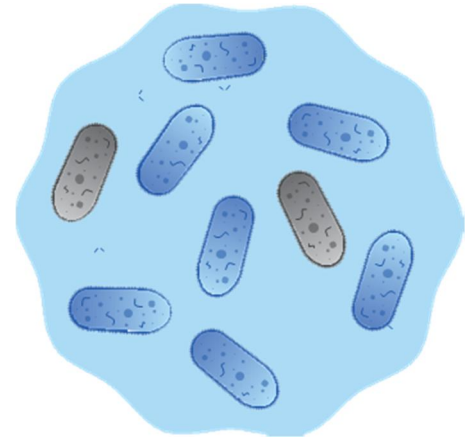




Nudge vs Superbugs: Using behavioural economics to reduce the overprescribing of antibiotics

Globally, resistance of bacteria to antimicrobial medicine, such as antibiotics, is a growing threat to human health. The strongest contributor is antibiotic use, and in Australia our antibiotic use is high. General practitioners (GPs) are important partners in efforts to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions.

Australia's Chief Medical Officer sent personalised letters to GPs whose antibiotic prescribing rates were in the top 30% for their region, to prompt them to consider reducing prescribing where appropriate and safe. GPs received one of four different letters- an education letter, or one of three letters with peer comparison feedback.



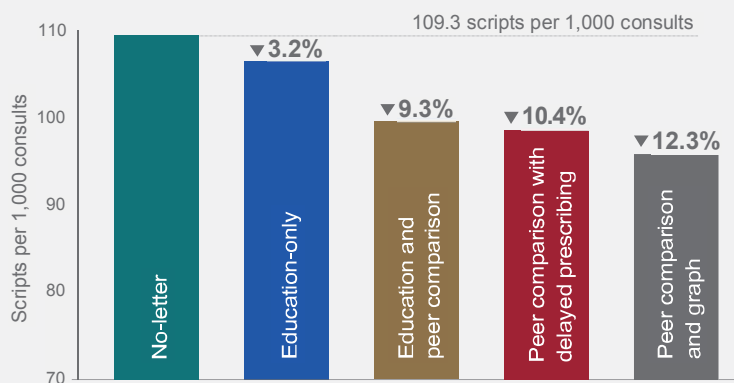
An example of peer comparison feedback:
“Dear Dr Name, you prescribe more antibiotics than 92% of prescribers in your region”

The three letters included peer comparison feedback with either: educational information; information and materials to support delayed prescribing; or an attention-grabbing graph.

We ran a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to test which approach works best.

There was a dramatic reduction in the number of prescriptions filled for GPs who received peer comparison feedback.

The three letters with peer comparison information **reduced prescription rates between 9.3% and 12.3%** in the six months after the letters were sent.



Our trial demonstrated the strong impact of using peer comparison feedback on antibiotic prescription rates, helping to tackle the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance.