Nudge vs Superbugs: 12 months on

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the biggest threats to global health.
One of the key drivers is antibiotic use, which remains high in Australia per capita.

Over 700,000 People globally die ... every year from untreatable infections. If we fail to act ...

... this number is expected to increase to **10 million people by 2050**

What did we do?

We sent letters to the top **30%** of prescribers at the start of the 2017 flu season comparing their prescribing to their peers

So, what happened?

Dear Dr. Smith

... your prescribing rate is higher than 91% of doctors for the Canberra region.

This simple nudge helped GPs bring scripts down by ...

13.6% after three months

9% after one year
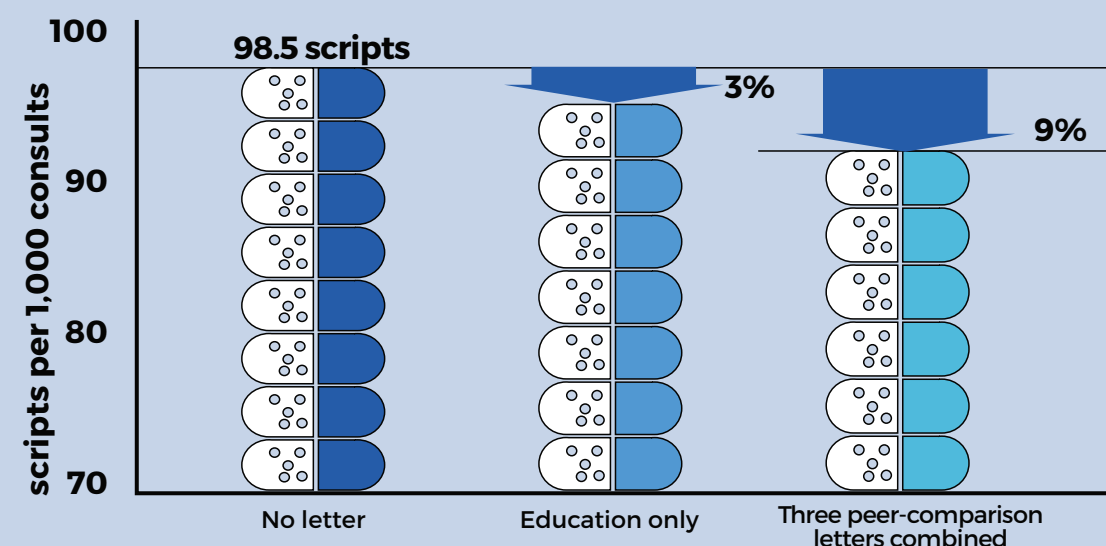
8% and remarkably, down again into the next flu season

190,000 Fewer prescriptions over 12 months

scripts per 1,000 consults

98.5 scripts

3%

9%

100

90

80

70

No letter | Education only | Three peer-comparison letters combined

BETA

Nudge versus Superbugs: 12 months on infographic text equivalent

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What did we do?

We sent letters to the top 30% of prescribers at the start of the 2017 flu season comparing their prescribing to their peers. The subject heading of the letter read:

> "Dear Dr Smith, your prescribing rate is higher than 91% of doctors for the Canberra region."

So what happened?

This simple nudge helped GPs bring scripts down by …

- 13.6% after three months
- 9% after one year
- And remarkably, down by 8% again into the next flu season

This resulted in 190,000 fewer prescriptions over 12 months.

The chart shows the number of scripts per 1,000 consultations over 12 months.

- Doctors who received no letter had 98.5 scripts per 1,000 consultations.
- For doctors who received the 'education only' letter, this fell by 3%.
- And it fell by 9% for doctors who received the any of the three peer-comparison letters.

Australian Government

Department of Health

Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA), Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet