SelfCare values contributions from general practitioners since these healthcare professionals are often best placed to recommend self-care to patients who may not recognise what they can do for themselves. Dr Pete Smith and colleagues report a brief communication which shows that a concerted communication campaign with consistent evidence-based messages can produce significant changes in antibiotic prescription practice in a primary care setting. The essence of their campaign was to give patients with self-limiting infections reliable information on the natural history of such conditions and the low likelihood of complications if antibiotics are not used. Advice on self-care with analgesic and antipyretic drugs was accompanied by information on when to call for help. The educational campaign was coupled with implementation of a ‘delayed prescribing’ policy which involves giving patients a prescription for antibiotics, but advising them only to collect it from the pharmacy should their symptoms get worse or fail to settle as anticipated. This interesting pilot study suggests that changes in patient knowledge can enable a change in prescriber behaviour so that appropriate self-care can replace inappropriate and ineffective use of antibiotics in common self-limiting infections.

Anyone taking a drug needs to be able to recognise the possible emergence of important adverse drug effects. Drug labels for both prescription and non-prescription medicines need to alert people to the earliest symptoms that might suggest a serious drug-related event so that appropriate action can be taken. Soller and Sallam present several case studies suggesting that both consumer and prescription medicine drug labels may be deficient in this regard. It is possible that some consensus is needed on the best way to describe such symptoms particularly those suggestive of serious but rare reactions (an example is Stevens Johnson syndrome) that may be seen across multiple therapeutic classes of drugs.

This issue sees another in our series of junior researcher posters. The poster format gives authors relatively new to academic publication the opportunity to hone their skills in communicating their research findings succinctly whilst gaining valuable experience of the challenges posed by peer review. We hope that achieving a citable publication of their work will encourage researchers at the beginning of their academic careers.

REFERENCES

