

A pill for every ill': Explaining the expansion in medicine use

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Abstract

This paper explores the major factors underpinning the expansion in medicine use over recent decades, using England as an example. It begins by constructing a 'progressive' model of the expansion and considers its limitations; it then uses a framework of countervailing powers to examine the contribution of key actors in the field. It examines the commercial orientation of the pharmaceutical industry and the strategies companies deploy to generate demand for their products. It explores the part played by doctors as researchers and gatekeepers to medicines, considering how features of medical knowledge and practice contribute to, rather than curtail, the expansion. It considers the role of the public as consumers of medicines, and the role of governments and insurance companies in both facilitating and controlling medicine use.

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