Dear Editor,

I welcome Martin and colleagues' thought-provoking reflections on the role of general practice in delivering primary prevention for asymptomatic people. Illich's concepts of clinical and social iatrogenesis resonate through their powerful arguments - that we are inappropriately preoccupied with delivering negligible-benefit medications to ostensibly healthy people. Yet the idea that GPs should largely offload prevention to overstretched public health teams and "focus on people who are sick, suffering, and symptomatic" doesn't sit well.

Preventative activity is not all equally valuable, and GPs play an irreplaceable role in helping individual patients navigate the evidence to work out whether a particular treatment is right for them. These conversations require evidence synthesis, skilful communication, and a holistic approach to patient-centred decision making. 'Cum scientia caritas' in other words. Yes primary care is in crisis, but we need more GPs providing high-quality care, not the same number of GPs providing a restricted range of services, nor further fragmentation.

Whilst the number of prevention-related guidelines has proliferated, it's misleading to imply that the mere existence of guidelines dictates what actually happens in the consultation room (much to the despair of NHS managers). For example, only a third of people with a CVD risk score of >20% use statins. And shouldn't we be welcoming ever-expanding access to evidence that can enhance our effectiveness?

GPs hold unique responsibility for individuals and local populations. From a purely individualistic perspective, the benefit of much primary prevention is negligible. However, from the community-oriented viewpoint the impact can be meaningful; preventing deaths that would otherwise have rippled through our communities.

I'm all for dropping incentives that promote low-value activity. But let's retain person-centred conversations about prevention, our community orientation, and the primary commitment to promoting life, health, and wellbeing. These elements reflect the very essence of general practice.

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Luke N Allen
GP and Co-Director of Global Primary Care
Oxford