

**Letters** Tackling health inequality

# Let's ask them to curb choice

BMJ 2007; 335 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39262.446192.3A> (Published 05 July 2007) Cite this as: BMJ 2007;335:8

- [Article](#)
- [Related content](#)
- [Article metrics](#)
- [Rapid responses](#)
- [Peer review](#)
- [Download PDF](#)

---

**Richard Ma, general practitioner**

[Author affiliations](#)

[richard.ma@btinternet.com](mailto:richard.ma@btinternet.com)

---

We have seen some paradigm shifts in managing health inequalities<sup>1</sup> in the past decade, which coincided with the Labour government taking power in 1997. However, the recent publication of England's health profile still shows marked inequalities in health between the north and south in England.<sup>2</sup> Despite the government's commitment to public health, financial resources that were earmarked for Choosing Health initiatives went into balancing primary care trusts' budgets. This is in parallel with unprecedented financial and political investments in the "choice" agenda despite evidence from a major national research programme funded by the Department of Health that it merely maintains the inequality divide and does nothing to address quality of health services and health outcomes.<sup>3</sup> In fact, when it comes to "choice," less is more.<sup>4</sup>

It is about time that we challenged politicians on the shameful waste of resources on initiatives of dubious value such as Choose and Book and walk-in centres, which increase health inequalities even further, as the well informed and middle classes seem to benefit the most.

## Footnotes

- Competing interests: None declared.

## References

1. ↪Heath I. Let's get tough on the causes of health inequality. *BMJ* 2007;**334**:1301. (23 June.) [FREE Full Text](#)
2. ↪Department of Health. Choosing health. [www.communityhealthprofiles.info/index.php](http://www.communityhealthprofiles.info/index.php)
3. ↪Fotaki M, Boyd A, Smith L, McDonald R, Roland M, Sheaff R, et al. *Patient choice and the organisation and delivery of health services: scoping review*. National Co-ordinating Centre for NHS Service Delivery and Organisation R&D. [www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/files/project/80-final-report.pdf](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/files/project/80-final-report.pdf)
4. ↪Bate P, Robert G. Choice. *BMJ* 2005;**331**:1488-9. [FREE Full Text](#)

[Back to top](#)

