Dear Editor,

After months of concerns over NHS spending and cut backs, the unethical practices of the pharmaceutical industry have finally been brought to light.

Drug companies have been accused of ‘highway robbery’ of the NHS as the prices of medicines are massively inflated to maximise profits. This obvious lack of concern for the health of vulnerable members of society is highlighted by their marketing methods; regardless of scientifically proven efficacy, doctors are given attractive incentives for prescribing selected drugs to ensure they are profitable.

When studying herbalism at university we were taught the Hippocratic Oath of which the emphasis is to 'do no harm'. The Declaration of Geneva, adapted from this oath declares,

'The health of the patient will be my first consideration. I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity.'

However, evidence published in the British Medical Journal indicates that only 12% of drugs prescribed by doctors have ever been proven to work [1] and 57% will either do harm or have no effect whatsoever; one begins to doubt that the directors of the pharmaceuticals have ever come across these moral teachings themselves.

Over the last thirty years at the Herbal Clinic we have seen a high percentage of patients frustrated and disillusioned by the failure of standard pharmaceutical medication. Traditional therapies like herbalism seek to determine and resolve the underlying cause of a disease rather than suppress the symptoms with powerful drugs - eg. anti-inflammatories. Symptoms are the signs of the body's reaction to illness and to mask these important signals can only build up future, often more serious, health problems.

Perhaps the 'big pharma' directors should receive some training in methods of healing, the primary directive of which is to 'do no harm.'

Yours faithfully,

The Herbal Clinic - Swansea
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1. WDDTY, June 2013: Clinical evidence handbook, BMJ publishing group, 2012