We agree that controlling blood pressure is more important for the prevention of complications, but the relative merits of intensive control of diabetes are greater than the article would make us believe. We also agree with the author that the UK results may not be generalisable to other countries, especially developing countries. The increased pressure on resources caused by an intensive approach would mean stretching the healthcare system to the limit and diverting resources away from other illnesses like infections and malnutrition that still remain number one killers in poor countries.

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Ms B. Pekarsky, one of the authors of the article, comments:

We thank the authors for pointing out our error in the calculations. With regard to the generalisability of our conclusions, we agree that they are less relevant to the Indian situation, except to the extent that it is essential that the opportunity cost of an intervention that requires more intensive use of general practitioners' time is considered in the decision-making processes.

Top 10 drugs

These tables show the top 10 subsidised drugs in 2001-02. The tables do not include private prescriptions.

Table 1

Top 10 drugs by defined daily dose/thousand population/day*

Drug	*PBS/RPBS* †
1. atorvastatin	65.605
2. simvastatin	45.282
3. salbutamol	26.634
4. omeprazole	25.376
5. frusemide	23.768
6. ramipril	23.691
7. celecoxib	22.255
8. rofecoxib	20.667
9. irbesartan	19.179
10. amlodipine besylate	18.132

Table 2

Top 10 drugs by prescription counts

Drug	*PBS/RPBS* †
1. atorvastatin	5,512,101
2. simvastatin	5,138,175
3. paracetamol	4,850,202
4. omeprazole	4,160,725
5. celecoxib	3,850,345
6. salbutamol	3,591,854
7. codeine with paracetamol	2,931,715
8. ranitidine hydrochloride	2,882,721
9. atenolol	2,827,368
10. irbesartan	2,716,788

Table 3

Top 10 drugs by cost to government

Drug	*PBS/RPBS* † *DDD/1000/day* *	*PBS/RPBS scripts*	*Cost to government ($A)*
1. atorvastatin	65.605	5,512,101	287,876,894
2. simvastatin	45.282	5,138,175	286,570,094
3. omeprazole	25.376	4,160,725	192,954,689
4. olanzapine	3.151	634,682	132,686,315
5. salmeterol and fluticasone	0	1,948,027	121,027,026
6. celecoxib	22.255	3,850,345	110,969,962
7. pravastatin	12.981	1,757,528	97,574,529
8. insulin (human)	11.876	431,219	79,363,981
9. rofecoxib	20.667	2,549,886	76,327,930
10. pantoprazole	9.586	1,796,286	75,681,935

* The defined daily dose (DDD)/thousand population/day is a more useful measure of drug utilisation than prescription counts. It shows how many people, in every thousand Australians, are taking the standard dose of a drug every day.

† PBS Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, RPBS Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Source: Drug Utilisation Sub-Committee (DUSC): Drug Utilisation Database © Commonwealth of Australia