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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

Three short reports this week give the lie to the belief that hospital doctors don't much care about the cost of the services they request (pp 1291, 1293, 1294). All three include recommendations that could reduce costs without adversely affecting patient care. Would that there was a formula that could be successfully applied to the health service as a whole. General practitioners should be cautiously pleased that the government, which has been searching hard for this formula, has been persuaded to back

off from some of its original suggestions for revising their contract (p 1319). Perhaps it will be similarly swayed by objections to the white paper raised by hospital doctors (p 1322). Elsewhere Richard Smith tells us that George Eliot in *Middlemarch* gives us the finest literary description of the state of medical practice before the Medical Act of 1858 (p 1297). Where would one go for the best literary (or cinematic) description of the state of medical practice today?