

Summary Report

Characteristics and mortality rates of patients in community hospitals in England: a national cohort study

Key findings

The study involved 76,704 adults admitted to 220 community hospitals over-1 year in 2016. This is an older population with average age 81 years living with multiple chronic progressive conditions. Most had an unplanned hospital admission (77%).

Over one in four died within 1 year of admission to the community hospital. Risk of dying increased with multiple conditions, particularly for noncancer patients with respiratory conditions, dementia and liver disease.

The traditional focus on rehabilitation and recovery in community hospitals has changed with an ageing population and the need for greater integration of palliative care to orientate care towards quality of life as the main goal of care.

Why is this study important?

This is the first national study to examine the patient population using community hospitals in England. Understanding care needs at a population level is vital to identify policy priorities to deliver high quality care. Community hospitals care for people in transition between hospital and home. They have a key role to manage care for our ageing populations to support recovery following a stressor event and plan for and anticipate nearness for end of life.

What did we do in the study?

We used national NHS data on hospital admissions linked with death registration data. We identified all community hospitals in England, adults admitted in 2016, and who died over-1 year after admission. The cohort formed two groups of cancer and noncancer, with marked difference in deaths (71% vs. 26%). We looked at key factors for end of life:

- ❖ Demographics, like age
- ❖ Illness, like diagnoses
- ❖ Environment, like admission type

What is the aim of this study?

We aimed to examine the characteristics of patients admitted to community hospitals in England and the factors associated with mortality over 1 year post-admission. The findings inform policy and clinical priorities to deliver high quality care.

Who did the study?

Dr Catherine Evans led the study on behalf of the study group SPACE - Symptom and Psychosocial Assessment and Communication Evaluation. This is a joint study between King's College London and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, funded by the National Institute for Health Research*



What did we find?

76,704 individual adults were admitted to 220 community hospitals in England. Patients had a median age of 81, were mostly white (95.8%) and female (58.8%). 4.8% of patients had cancer and 70.8% died within a year of the admission, mostly between 0-28 days post-admission (55%). Those with noncancer conditions, 25.8% died within a year.

Noncancer patients with chronic heart disease, respiratory diseases, dementia and liver disease had the highest mortality rate. Risks increased with high multimorbidity for cancer and noncancer, and for unplanned admission versus planned admission. Risks increased with advancing age in noncancer conditions, but not in cancer.

Our conclusions and next steps

This study reports a novel analysis of the characteristics of a national cohort of adults admitted to community hospitals and outcome of death over 1 year. The findings show that this is a mainly older population with chronic progressive disease and multiple conditions. Over one in four were in the last year of life.

The wide variation in end of life indicates the need for care and treatment to support both recovery and plan for and anticipate end of life. The findings challenge views of community hospitals, with relatively low technology, as managing seemingly simplistic care needs. To deliver high quality care requires a model of integrated care between community hospitals, geriatric care and palliative care, and a skilled workforce to manage multiple care needs across the continuum of care and into end of life

Further study and contact details



<https://tinyurl.com/SPACEtoolkit>

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