

NHS urged to improve epilepsy care after 70 per cent rise in deaths

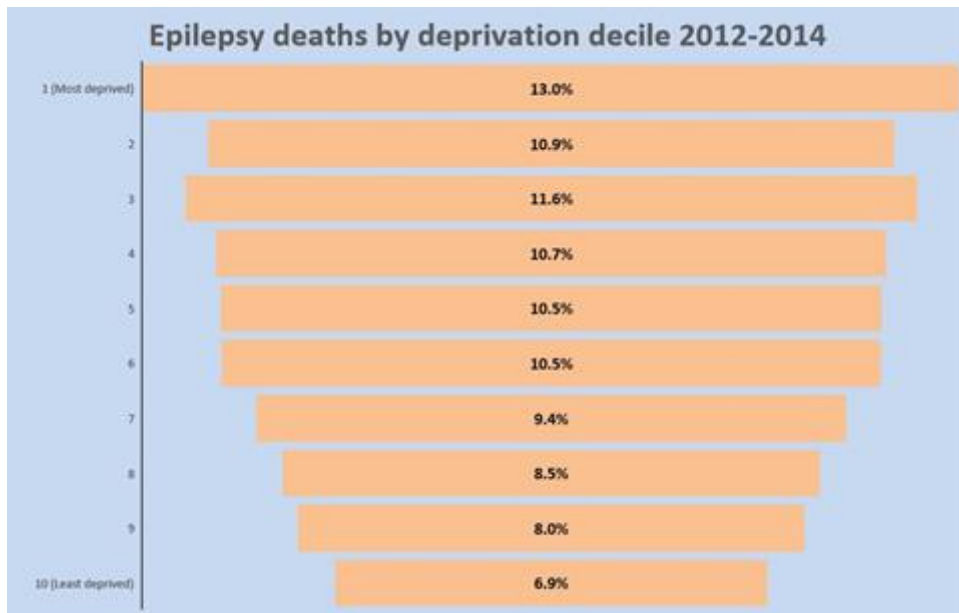
By [Shaun Lintern](#)

19 March 2018

New [research by Public Health England](#) has found the numbers of annual deaths of epilepsy patients has increased by 70 per cent between 2001 to 2014.

Epilepsy sufferers living in the most deprived areas of the country are also more likely to die than those living in more affluent regions. The research has sparked warnings that their care is being neglected. According to the research the top three underlying causes of death for epilepsy sufferers were epilepsy at 25 per cent, stroke at 9 per cent and unspecified dementia at 7 per cent.

In 2001 there were 1,936 deaths of patients with epilepsy but by 2014 this increased by almost 70 per cent to 3,291. Of all the neurological conditions studied by PHE only epilepsy was shown to have a significant relationship with deprivation, with 13 deaths per 100,000 population in the most deprived areas compared to five deaths per 100,000 in the least deprived. Between 2012 and 2014, 13 per cent of all epilepsy deaths were in the most deprived areas of the country compared to just 7 per cent in the least deprived parts of the country.



PHE’s analysis also found that overall deaths of people with neurological conditions since 2001 has seen a 39 per cent increase, compared with a six per cent decrease in all-cause deaths over the same period. When standardised for a growing and ageing population, the overall rate of deaths associated with a neurological condition had increased by 13 per cent, while the all cause mortality rate had decreased by 18 per cent. Professor Julia Verne, head of clinical epidemiology at Public Health England, said: “This report is a significant addition to what we know about the impact of complex neurological conditions. The health sector can use it to identify opportunities to improve care and treatment for people who suffer from them.”

Dr Chris Kipps, a consultant neurologist at the University Hospital Southampton Foundation Trust and chair of the quality committee at the Association of British Neurologists said the data clearly showed deaths of epilepsy sufferers were higher in areas of deprivation and this needed to be explored.

“Many of these causes of death are preventable. It may be that in these areas the risks and comorbidities are not being adequately addressed.” He said the report was a call for action to ensure neurological services were properly invested in, adding that the “increasing prevalence of neurological conditions means there will be problems with having enough service provision.” He said other areas needing to be addressed included

end of life care for these patients with around half dying in hospital compared to patients with cancer for example: “I just don’t see a justification for that,” he said.

In its report PHE said: “The findings of the data analysis study suggest that there are opportunities to improve the morbidity and quality of life of people with epilepsy, in particular in areas of socioeconomic deprivation. There is need for a better understanding of the links between deprivation, prevalence of epilepsy and the premature death of those with epilepsy.” It added that this could include improving the clinical management of patients and reducing deaths by making improvements to their wider health such as smoking, alcohol and poor diet. NHS England has been approached for comment.

The full text article can be accessed via the link below (behind paywall):
<https://www.hsj.co.uk/quality-and-performance/nhs-urged-to-improve-epilepsy-care-after-70-per-cent-rise-in-deaths/7021961.article>