

# Pneumonia investment doesn't match mortality burden

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UK investment in pneumonia research is lacking when compared to spending on influenza and tuberculosis, according to a new study by the University of Southampton and University College London (UCL).

By calculating the amount spent on researching respiratory infections and their [mortality rates](#), the study authors were able to assess UK public and charitable sector investment against the global burden of the diseases.

Published in *EBioMedicine* the study found that while £484.21 per death was invested in influenza research, less than a tenth of that figure (£43.08) was spent on pneumonia research. That's despite investment in pneumonia research rising substantially since 2010, when the figure was just £7.39.

"Investment relative to mortality for pneumonia has increased in recent years, but it remains low compared to other respiratory infections like tuberculosis and influenza," says co-author Dr Stuart Clarke, from the University of Southampton's Faculty of Medicine. "Pneumonia mainly affects people in low to [middle income countries](#) and figures also suggest it was a significant secondary complication in a number of influenza deaths."

Led by researchers from Southampton's Global Health Research Institute, the study found that total funding for pneumonia in the three-year period from 2011 to 2013 was greater than total investment across

the 14 years from 1997 to 2010.

Of all infectious disease research investment between 2011-2013 (£917 million), £28.8 million (3.1 per cent) went to pneumonia. Translational research, which applies findings to a health care setting, accounted for 33.3 per cent of this spend, compared with 1997-2010 when funding was almost entirely preclinical. High-burden areas such as paediatrics, elderly care and [antimicrobial resistance](#) received little investment.

"Antimicrobial resistance is an under-resourced area across all investments for infectious disease research, and pneumonia is no exception," says lead author Michael Head of UCL and Southampton. "Globally, resistance to some strains of pneumonia is increasing, so it is imperative to increase development in the R&D pipeline of new antibacterial therapies, especially infections that are acquired in-hospitals, where the pathogens are highly resistant."

The European Commission provided the largest proportion of pneumonia research investments between 2011 and 2013 (31.2 per cent) through six large awards, amounting to £9.2 million. The second largest contribution was from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which provided £7.4 million (26.6 per cent) of [investment](#) across five awards.

Between 1997 and 2010, the Wellcome Trust was the leading funder of UK-awarded [pneumonia](#) research (then 44.8 per cent of the total, now 15.9 per cent).

Professor Marie-Louise Newell, Head of the Global Health Research Institute at Southampton, says: "The study highlights the demand for a comprehensive overview of where infectious disease research spending is being made on global level to ensure that resources are allocated wisely and funding gaps are avoided."

**More information:** Mapping pneumonia research: a systematic analysis of UK investments and published outputs 1997-2013, *EBioMedicine*, 2015.

Provided by University of Southampton

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