

Poorer patients face malnutrition risk

November 16 2016, by Rob Kidd

Patients with chronic lung disease living in deprived areas are more likely to be malnourished than those from wealthier postcodes, a QUT study has found.

The study, published in the *Clinical Nutrition* journal, assessed 424 outpatients with chronic [obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD). COPD is a group of lung conditions including persistent bronchitis and emphysema that make it difficult to empty air out of the lungs because airways have been damaged.

The patients, from a large city hospital and smaller rural hospital in the UK, were screened for malnutrition risk and their level of [deprivation](#) was assessed according to the UK Government's index of multiple deprivation.

Released on World COPD Day (NOVEMBER 16), the study found 22 per cent of COPD patients were at risk of malnutrition, with those from more [deprived areas](#) significantly more likely to be at risk. .

Dr Peter Collins, from QUT's School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, led the research with colleagues from the University of Southampton in the UK.

"Deprivation was greater among the COPD outpatients at the larger city hospital and 28 per cent of those patients were malnourished, compared to 17 per cent at the smaller hospital in a more affluent area," Dr Collins said.

"This study suggests for the first time that deprivation is one of the strongest predictors of malnutrition risk in COPD outpatients."

COPD is incurable and affects more than 1.45 million Australians. The direct cost of COPD to the Australian healthcare system is estimated to be \$900 million and previous research by the QUT group found malnutrition in Australian COPD patients was associated with longer hospital stays and increased hospital costs.

Dr Collins said poor nutrition is a key driver for poor outcomes for patients with COPD.

"We already know people in deprived areas are more likely to get COPD. But now we know those people with COPD living in more deprived areas are also more likely to suffer malnutrition," he said.

"Social inequality in health has been an area of interest for governments around the world for decades. It is of course unfair for people to be more susceptible to illness because of their postcode and this research indicates where they live also predicts their risk of malnutrition".

"Clinicians must consider social deprivation when devising nutritional management plans for COPD [patients](#)."

More information: P.F. Collins et al. The influence of deprivation on malnutrition risk in outpatients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), *Clinical Nutrition* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.clnu.2016.11.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clnu.2016.11.005)

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