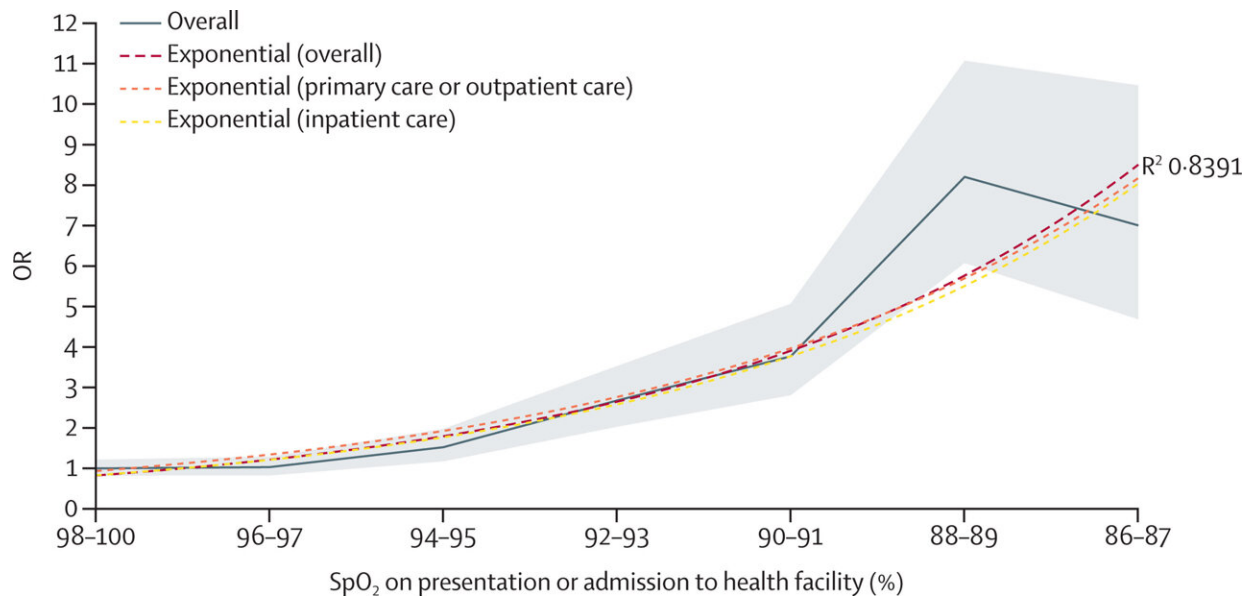


# Pulse oximeters crucial in primary care settings, say researchers

July 8 2024



Odds ratio (OR) of death presented for children with different SpO<sub>2</sub> values compared with children with SpO<sub>2</sub> 98–100%. Overall OR is presented in gray with 95% CI shaded in light gray. Credit: *The Lancet Global Health* (2024). DOI: 10.1016/S2214-109X(24)00209-2

Research [published](#) in *The Lancet Global Health* describes the crucial role that pulse oximeters have in risk-stratification in both hospital and primary care or outpatient settings. Carina King, Associate Professor at the Department of Global Public Health has had a leading role in the newly published viewpoint.

Pulse oximeters are essential for assessing blood oxygen levels in emergency departments, operating theaters, and hospital wards. However, although the role of pulse oximeters in detecting hypoxemia and guiding oxygen therapy is widely recognized, their role in [primary care](#) settings is less clear.

In the viewpoint article "Hypoxemia and risk of death among children: rethinking [oxygen saturation](#), risk-stratification, and the role of pulse oximetry in primary care," King and co-authors argue that pulse oximeters have a crucial role in risk-stratification in both hospital and primary care or outpatient settings.

Analysis of hospital and primary care data from diverse [low-income](#) and middle-income settings shows elevated risk of death for children with moderate hypoxemia and severe hypoxemia. Hence moderate hypoxemia should prompt reassessment, possible referral, and close follow-up.

The authors provide practical guidance to better support front-line health-care workers to use [pulse oximetry](#), including rethinking traditional binary SpO<sub>2</sub> thresholds and promoting a more nuanced approach to identification and emergency treatment of the severely ill child.

**More information:** Hamish R Graham et al, Hypoxaemia and risk of death among children: rethinking oxygen saturation, risk-stratification, and the role of pulse oximetry in primary care, *The Lancet Global Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/S2214-109X\(24\)00209-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(24)00209-2)

Provided by Karolinska Institutet

Citation: Pulse oximeters crucial in primary care settings, say researchers (2024, July 8) retrieved

8 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-07-pulse-oximeters-crucial-primary.html>

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