

Where you live doesn't matter if you have heart disease, study finds

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People living in rural areas are at no greater risk of dying from heart disease than their urban counterparts, according to a new study by researchers at Women's College Hospital and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES).

The study, the first to examine outpatient quality of care between urban and rural communities, counters existing research, which suggested gaps in care for those living in [rural areas](#).

"Research has long suggested people with [heart disease](#) in rural areas are at a disadvantage when it comes to access to [health](#) care and longevity," says Dr. Sacha Bhatia, lead author of the study and a cardiologist at Women's College Hospital. "Our study shows once a patient leaves the hospital their overall [health outcomes](#) are similar regardless of where they live."

The study, published today in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, examined the records of more than 38,000 people with chronic ischemic heart disease living in either urban or rural areas. They found, in comparison to their urban counterparts, those in rural areas:

- Had fewer specialist visits
- Visited hospital emergency departments more frequently for care
- Were prescribed statins less often
- Were tested less frequently for cholesterol and blood sugar levels
- Experienced a similar risk of hospitalization and death

The researchers say while those living in rural areas access their care differently, it did not result in poor health outcomes.

"From our study, we know that people with heart disease in rural areas tend to rely heavily on emergency departments for their care because of a lack of outpatient access to family doctors and specialists," said Dr. Bhatia, also a scientist at ICES. "Yet, despite an increase in [emergency department](#) admissions in rural areas, we didn't see worse health outcomes for these individuals."

Provided by Women's College Hospital

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