

Socioeconomic Status and Heart Failure in Sydney



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Background	Socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with an increased risk of developing heart failure and with inferior health outcomes following diagnosis.
Methods	Data for hospitalisations and deaths due to heart failure in the Sydney metropolitan region were extracted from New South Wales hospital records and Australian Bureau of Statistics databases for 1999–2003. Standardised rates were analysed according to patients' residential local government area and correlated with an index of socioeconomic disadvantage.
Results	Eight of the 13 local government areas with standardised separation rate ratios significantly higher than all NSW, and those with the six highest standardised separation rate ratios, were in Greater Western Sydney. Rates of heart failure hospitalisations per local government area were inversely correlated with level of socioeconomic status.
Conclusions	Higher rates of heart failure hospitalisations among residents of socioeconomically disadvantaged regions within Sydney highlight the need for strategies to lessen the impact of disadvantage and strategies to improve cardiovascular health.
Keywords	Socioeconomic factors • Health status • Health disparities • Heart failure • Sydney • Australia

Background

Internationally, socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with an increased risk of developing heart failure (HF) and with poorer outcomes [1–7]. Socioeconomic deprivation has been associated with adverse cardiovascular outcomes in Australian adults [8,9], but the level of risk has not been quantified [10] nor the causal relationships well understood. Rates of death due to HF are higher among those living in the most disadvantaged areas than among those in the least disadvantaged areas [8].

Socioeconomic status and place of residence is highly relevant in the context of current discussion of health reform in Australia and elsewhere [11,12]. We investigated the relationship between heart failure outcomes (rates of hospitalisations and deaths) and socioeconomic status in a study of hospitalisation and mortality rates in patients admitted to hospitals in metropolitan Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), Australia during the period 1999–2003. The Sydney metropolitan region is characterised by marked variation in socioeconomic status and includes some of the most advantaged and most disadvantaged populations in New South Wales [13].

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Patients and Methods

Data were extracted from Health Outcomes Statistical Toolkit (HOIST) data warehouse, maintained by the Centre for Epidemiology and Research in the New South Wales (NSW)

Department of Health. Cases were defined as patients discharged with a principal diagnosis of HF (ICD10, I50 or ICD.9, 428). Where correlations with socio-economic indexes were estimated hospital data for the period 1999/2000–2001/2002 were used. Mortality data (for four, five-year periods up

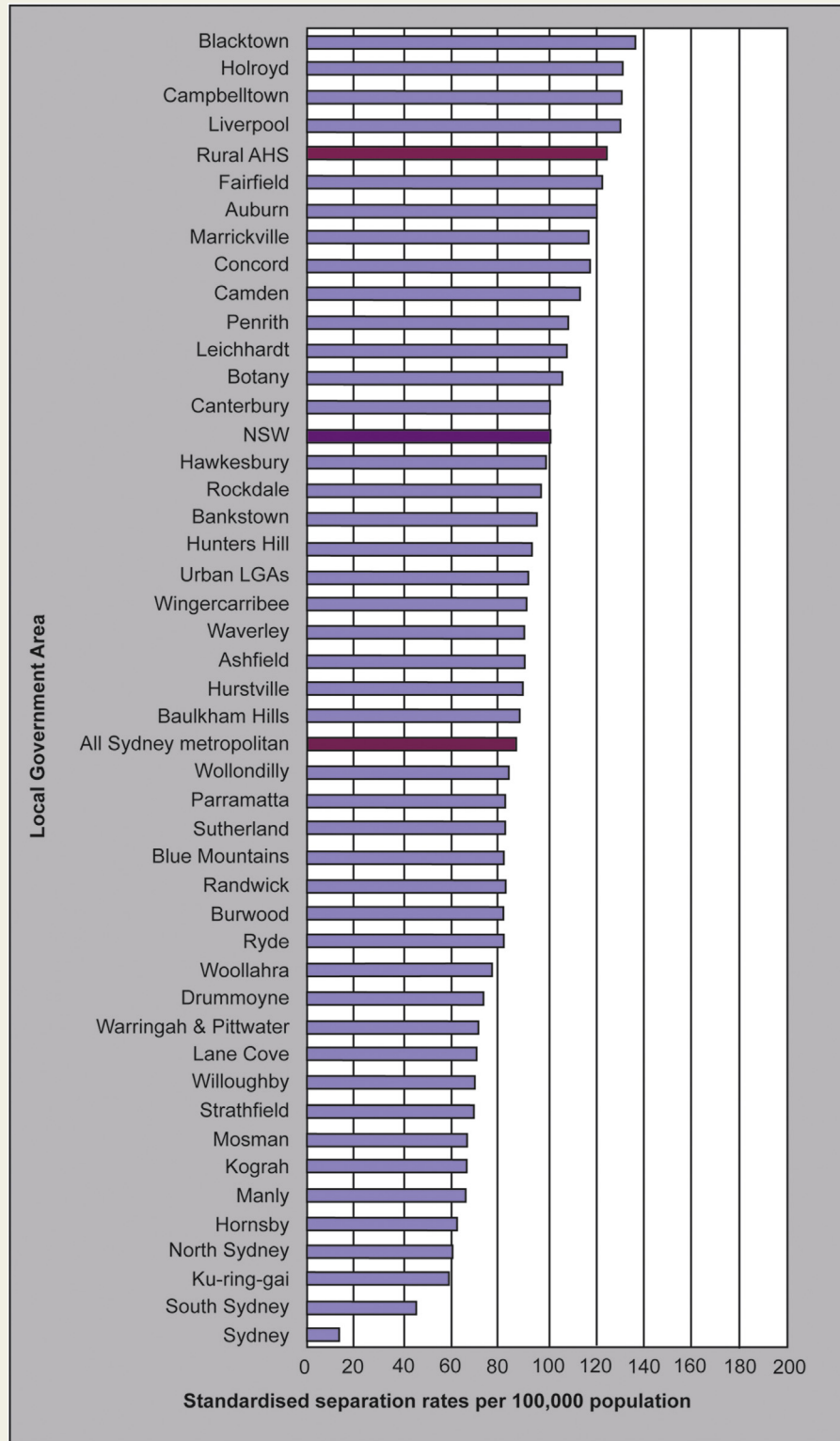


Figure 1 Standardised heart failure separations per 100,000 population.

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