

# Healthcare use by the very old: Newcastle 85+ Study

School for  
Primary Care  
Research

## STUDY SUMMARY



National Institute for  
Health Research

Very old people, those aged 85 years and older, are the fastest growing group in society at the moment. Commonly this group of people have many illnesses such as high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes and dementia. Consequently it is assumed rightly or wrong that they are very high users of GP and other health care services. In 2006, Newcastle University set up a unique study to look in detail at the health of people aged over 85 years and also their use of health care over a 5 year period. Over a 100 people joined the study from GP practices and agreed to have their GP records looked at and also to home visits by nurses to assess their health. We found that between 85 and 90 years, people were more likely to visit their GP than other professional e.g. nurse or pharmacist; by 90 most of their health care was provided by the GP. With an ageing population, it is essential that GPs are adequately trained to act as the key healthcare provider for a group of people with complex health needs.



### Publications:

Collerton J, Jagger C, Yadegarfar ME, Davies K, Parker SG, Robinson L, Kirkwood TBL. Deconstructing Complex Multi-morbidity in the Very Old: Findings from the Newcastle 85+ Study. *BioMed Research International* 2016. doi:10.1155/2016/8745670

Collerton J, Davies K, Jagger C, Kingston A, Bond J, Eccles M, Robinson L, Martin- Ruiz C, von Zglinicki T, James O, Kirkwood T. Health and disease in 85 year olds: baseline findings from the Newcastle 85+ cohort study. *BMJ* 2009;399:b4904. doi:10.1136/bmj.b4904.

To find out more about  
this study, please visit  
[http://research.ncl.  
ac.uk/85plus/](http://research.ncl.ac.uk/85plus/)

85+



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**Issue:**

Older people ageing 85 years and over (the very old) are currently the fastest growing age group. Living with many chronic illnesses (e.g. arthritis, diabetes and dementia) is the 'norm' for the very old but this group are often excluded from research studies. It is often assumed that this patient group are high users of healthcare services especially GP and community services.

**What we did:**

The Newcastle 85+ Study recruited over 1000 people aged 85 and over (from GP lists in Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside), to study their health and use of health services over a five year period. Data was collected from home visits undertaken by nurses and also information from their GP medical records. We looked at their use of primary care services (e.g. GP, nurse, pharmacist contacts) and hospital services such as admissions, out-patient clinic appointments, day hospital use, accident and emergency visits.

**What we found:**

Our findings showed that between the ages of 85 and 90 years, people are much more likely to consult their GP than other primary healthcare team members. Increases in hospital admissions and use of day hospitals over the 5 years were also found but the high use of

With a rapidly ageing population, it is essential that GPs are appropriately skilled, and adequately supported by specialist colleagues, as the main healthcare provider for a population with complex and challenging needs.