

## Mail Online

### 50,000 people die from malnutrition a year in NHS hospitals,' claim Tories

By [James Chapman](#)

Last updated at 8:37 AM on 26th February 2010



Frail: The elderly often suffer the worst from malnutrition. (Posed by model)

Almost 50,000 Health Service patients a year are dying while suffering from malnutrition in hospitals in England, shocking figures suggest.

A Government report says official statistics which claim that just 239 people a year die from malnutrition in hospital are 'very misleading'.

It warns that 200 times as many patients die while not properly nourished.

Critics attacked ministers after it emerged that the report was delivered in August last year, but has only just been released.

Health campaigners have said that elderly patients in particular are often treated as 'second class citizens' on wards.

Families complain about meals being placed out of reach of incapacitated patients or taken away before they have had time to finish.

There are also concerns about the meals' quality, despite attempts by the Government to improve them.

And this week's shocking report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, where appalling care has been

The latest end-of-year report from the Government's Nutrition Action Plan Delivery Board said 239 patients died because of malnutrition in English hospitals in 2007. Overall, 2,656 have died from malnutrition in hospitals and care homes since 1997.

But it added: 'We believe that these statistics can be very misleading.

'They represent less than 0.5 per cent of the number who died in hospital with malnutrition. We know that malnutrition predisposes to disease, it delays recovery from illness and it increases mortality.



Shadow health minister Stephen O'Brien described the new figures as 'horrific'

'It follows that the effect of malnutrition on mortality rates is substantially greater than the number reported to have died because of malnutrition.'

Tory health spokesman Stephen O'Brien said: 'The Government has sat on this devastating report since last summer - it is tragic to think that many more lives might have been saved if they hadn't deliberately delayed publishing it because of the embarrassment it causes them.

'It needs to free doctors and nurses from a culture of box-ticking and bureaucracy so that every patient can get the care they need in hospital.'

Malnourishment affects more than ten per cent of older people, according to the British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition.

Michelle Mitchell, charity director for Age Concern and Help the Aged, said: 'Despite thousands of older people dying in hospital while malnourished each year, the failure of health ministers to lay out any concrete actions to tackle the problem will mean this scandal will continue.'

But Health Minister Phil Hope said: 'It completely misleads the public to compare the number of patients dying as a result of malnutrition with the number of people who have some degree of malnourishment, often as a result of ill-health.

'It does not necessarily contribute to or is a cause of an individual's death. To suggest otherwise is irresponsible.' ~Inefficient hospitals would receive less money for operations and treatments under a Tory government.

Hundreds would have funding slashed to the levels of their most cost-effective counterparts. But critics said this would lead to the closure of many smaller units.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1253795/50-000-people-dying-malnourished-NHS-hospitals-claim-Tories.html#ixzz0iqAmm5D0>

Source:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1253795/50-000-people-dying-malnourished-NHS-hospitals-claim-Tories.html>