Scottish Atlas of Variation
Exploring geographical variation in the health & care system in Scotland.
An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division (ISD) introduces experimental statistics for the third iteration of the Scottish Atlas of Variation and presents geographical variation of Statin prescribing for people aged 45 years and over, Polypharmacy – “Triple Whammy” prescribing for people aged 65 years and over, and rates of Heart Failure and Stroke.

Information is reported at Health Board of Residence and Local Authority level for financial years 2013/14 – 2017/18.

Main Points

Statins 45+ years
- In 2017/18 there was a 1.4-fold variation in the percentage of people aged 45 years and over prescribed a statin across NHS Boards, ranging from 23.7% to 34.4%, adjusted for age and sex. The corresponding figure for Scotland as a whole was 29.8%.

Polypharmacy – “Triple Whammy” 65+ years
- In 2017/18 there was a 2.4-fold variation in the percentage of people aged 65 years and over prescribed the “triple whammy” across NHS Boards, ranging from 0.96% to 2.3%, adjusted for age and sex. The corresponding figure for Scotland as a whole was 1.4%.

Heart Failure
- In 2017/18 there was a 1.7-fold variation in the rate of hospital stays with a heart failure diagnosis across NHS Boards, ranging from 114.2 to 196.3 per 100,000 population, adjusted for age and sex. The corresponding figure for Scotland as a whole was 152.3.

Stroke
- In 2017/18 there was a 2.0-fold variation in the rate of hospital stays with a stroke diagnosis across NHS Boards, ranging from 107.5 to 217.8 per 100,000 population, adjusted for age and sex. The corresponding figure for Scotland as a whole was 185.9.
Background

Statins are a group of medicines that can help lower the level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol in the blood. Having a high level of LDL cholesterol is potentially dangerous, as it can lead to a hardening and narrowing of the arteries and cardiovascular disease.

The term “triple whammy” refers to the concurrent use of three specific medicines; a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) (used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation), an ACE (Angiotensin-Converting-Enzyme) inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (used to treat high blood pressure), and a diuretic. The use of these three medicines together can increase the risk of acute kidney injury (AKI).

The Scottish Atlas of Variation aims to highlight geographical variation in the provision of health services and associated health outcomes. It is designed to facilitate discussion and raise questions about why differences exist and promote quality improvement through this conversation.

The Scottish Atlas of Variation is an important tool to contribute to eliminating unwarranted variation, realising Realistic Medicine and support reducing harm and waste within the health service. The tool is designed to highlight variation and no judgement on the performance or inferences on quality of care of one geographical area against another should be concluded.

Please see the Introduction section of our website for more details.

Contact

Graham McGowan  
Principal Information Analyst  
0141 282 2233  
graham.mcgowan@nhs.net

Catherine Drury  
Senior Information Analyst  
0131 275 7710  
catherine.drury@nhs.net

Lee Sherlock  
Senior Information Analyst  
0141 207 1687  
lee.sherlock@nhs.net

Further Information

Find out more in the interactive dashboard. The data from this publication is available to download from our ISD web page along with user guide, methodology and metadata documents.