Postcode lottery means dementia patients in poorer areas are 27% less likely to get treatment

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## **Campaigners say NHS England must act to tackle inequality with the number of cases set to hit half a million in the next ten years**

Dementia sufferers in poorer areas of England are 27% less likely to be given[medication](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/medicine), according to research.

[A University College London](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/university-college-london) team could give no explanation for the inequality, after it looked at 77,000 people diagnosed with dementia or getting anti-dementia medication between 2002 and 2013. It found no such problem in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Dr Claudia Cooper said it could be down to the countries’ differing health policies, pointing out Scotland and Northern Ireland spend more on health and prescribe more dementia drugs.

She added: “When access to any treatment is rationed, wealthier patients tend to be better-equipped to navigate the healthcare system and get around the restrictions.

“They might do more research and know what to do to get the diagnosis and treatment that they want. They could also be more confident and assertive in asking doctors for specific treatments.”

Alzheimer’s Society head of policy George McNamara urged [NHS](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/nhs) England to end to the postcode lottery, adding: “It is unacceptable that such discrimination should exist in accessing healthcare.

“This research shows that the poorest people in society are missing out on vital anti-dementia treatments.

“We urge NHS England to put an end to this postcode lottery, and call on healthcare professionals working in these deprived areas to alert their patients to all the treatment options available.

“It is essential that we have the right strategies in place to support all people living with dementia to successfully navigate the health and social care system and get the treatments they need, regardless of where they live.”

For dementia that currently cannot be cured, some types of medicine may prevent symptoms getting worse for a period of time. These medicines are usually given to people in the early and middle stages of the disease, to try to maintain or improve their independence.

Hilary Evans, chief executive of Alzheimer’s Research UK, said: “Existing treatments for dementia can help people cope with some of their symptoms, and although they don’t work for everyone, it’s vital that they should be offered to all those who could benefit.”

More than 850,000 people in the UK have a form of dementia. In less than ten years, a million people will be living with the condition.

Dementia costs the UK economy over £26billion a year.