

Here is something you probably wouldn't expect. Hospitalizing heart failure patients increased their death rate! The University of Alabama at Birmingham published this information in the April issue of the *Journal of Cardiac Failure*.

The university conducted a fairly large study which included almost eight thousand heart failure patients. In the study, two groups were compared; those who were hospitalized for heart failure and those who were not. Two years after the beginning of the study, the patients who were admitted into the hospital had a higher death rate than those who were not.

It would be reasonable to assume that if you suffered with heart failure, the place you would want to be would be in the hospital. According to this study, that is the last place you would want to be. Hospitalized patients had a 188% increase in death from cardiovascular causes and a 422% increase in death due to progressive heart failure.

The authors of this study recommended that to reduce these deaths, it would be necessary to use evidence-based therapy, patient education, and new strategies to prevent hospital admissions.

Evidence-based therapy is an approach where medical professionals only use procedures supported by reasonable research. This is a tall order, since very little of what is done today in health care is supported by adequate and unbiased research. I will be discussing this in more detail in future articles.

It is also critical when faced with a significant health issue, that we take responsibility for our own health. Health care is rarely cut and dry. There are typically multiple diagnostic and treatment choices available for any given condition. When the best approach is unclear, input from an educated and involved patient can often lead to a better outcome.

This means that instead of letting our health care professionals make all the decisions for us, we form a partnership with our providers. We must also acknowledge that the choices we make outside of the doctor's office, often have a greater impact on our health than those we make inside. We must learn to eat better, move better, and think better if we want to prevent those conditions that medicine is unable to cure.

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