

Heart failure is a leading cause of hospitalizations, but it doesn't have to be

For all too many people living with heart failure, hospitalizations are a recurring part of life, affecting the lives of both patients and their caregivers.

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There is a condition known to cause more hospitalizations in people over 65 than pneumonia and heart attacks.¹ It's called heart failure. While this might seem surprising, at least 26 million people worldwide are living with heart failure.²

The term 'heart failure' can seem scary. Heart failure sounds like the heart might suddenly stop beating or you might be about to have a heart attack, but neither is true. Heart failure is a progressive disease where the heart muscle becomes stiff or weak, meaning it's unable to pump enough blood to meet the demands of the body.³

How heart failure and hospitalizations impact patients

People who are diagnosed with heart failure are likely to live shorter lives than those diagnosed with a number of common cancers, including both prostate and breast.⁴ Moreover, there is likely to be a significant impact on the quality of their lives.^{5,6} One of the main reasons for this, as noted by many people with heart failure, is recurring stays in the hospital, often driven by symptoms like shortness of breath or swelling of the feet, legs, and ankles.^{7,8}

Two patients are diagnosed with heart failure every minute.¹⁴

Hospitalizations are such a recurring part of a patient's life that in the time it has taken you to read this, two people with heart failure will have been admitted to hospital.^{9,10} Symptoms may be improved by a hospitalization in the short term, but it can be rough on daily life. A visit to hospital for heart failure usually lasts, on average, between five and ten days¹¹ and around 25% of patients are re-admitted within 30 days of discharge.¹² These recurrent experiences can be nerve-wracking and profoundly disrupt the lives of patients and caregivers.

While there is no cure, it is vital patients with heart failure receive prompt and urgent treatment. This is because damage to the heart continues to occur even if no symptoms are present. For patients with heart failure, trips to the hospital are a crucial time for them to talk about their disease. It's also an opportunity for their doctor to re-assess their condition and determine how to improve their care moving forward. However, these discussions when patients are in hospital are not enough to help those affected.

Keeping people with heart failure living longer

The right care plan makes a huge difference to people living with heart failure.

A diverse hospital team provides the best holistic care and support to heart failure patients and their caregivers. Nurses, doctors, physiotherapists and counsellors can review all the different aspects of a patient's life to decide how to best manage their disease, allowing them to live longer and keep doing the things they love day-to-day.



We urgently need to overcome low disease awareness so patients and their caregivers can be more active in managing their disease. It's recognized that information and education are critical to early diagnosis in order to improve patients' chances of staying out of the hospital.¹³

Research has also shown, however, that patients often feel they do not have enough time or get the information they require from their doctors.¹³ So awareness is key at a physician level; ensuring doctors have adequate knowledge and skills to help diagnose heart failure and support patients and caregivers.¹³

For policymakers and governments, it is essential they are aware and recognize heart failure as an urgent challenge for healthcare systems, which requires robust guidelines and integrated strategies to improve patient care.

Novartis continues to lead the way in educating and encouraging dialogue around heart failure, so patients can live longer and healthier lives.

For those with heart failure, hospitalizations are a recurring part of life, but they don't have to be. Learn more:

A helping hand for those returning home after a heart failure hospitalization

After a loved one has been in hospital for Heart Failure, discharge day comes as a relief. As a carer for someone with Heart Failure, looking after them following a visit to hospital can feel like a lot of responsibility. To help carers through this tricky time, we have created a roadmap for carers.

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