

## For the next two weeks talk should be about the 30,000 ...

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In [February this year](#) the Independent reported:

*An unprecedented increase in “excess deaths” in England and Wales could be linked to underfunding in the NHS and social care system, new research suggests.*

*“Relentless cuts” to the health service could be behind 30,000 deaths in 2015, argued researchers in two articles published in the [Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine](#).*

The research that backed up these findings was undertaken by highly credible academics. The government, of course, rubbished their work. I believe it. As a result I want to share what the [Royal Society of Medicine](#) said on the findings:

*Researchers exploring why there has been a substantial increase in mortality in England and Wales in 2015 conclude that failures in the health and social care system linked to disinvestment are likely to be the main cause.*

*There were 30,000 excess deaths in 2015, representing the largest increase in deaths in the post-war period. The excess deaths, which included a large spike in January that year, were largely in the older population who are most dependent on health and social care.*

*Reporting their analysis in the [Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine](#), the researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of Oxford and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, tested four possible explanations for the January 2015 spike in mortality.*

*After ruling out data errors, cold weather and flu as main causes for the spike, the researchers found that NHS performance data revealed clear evidence of health system failures. Almost all targets were missed including ambulance call-out times and A&E waiting times, despite unexceptional A&E attendances compared to the same month in previous years. Staff absence rates rose and more posts remained empty as staff had not been appointed.*

*Professor Martin McKee, from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said: "The impact of cuts resulting from the imposition of austerity on the NHS has been profound. Expenditure has failed to keep pace with demand and the situation has been exacerbated by dramatic reductions in the welfare budget of £16.7 billion and in social care spending."*

*He added: "With an aging population, the NHS is ever more dependent on a well-functioning social care system. Yet social care has also faced severe cuts, with a 17% decrease in spending for older people since 2009, while the number of people aged 85 years and over has increased by 9%."*

*"To maintain current levels of social care would require an extra £1.1 billion, which the government has refused."*

*Professor McKee continued: "The possibility that the cuts to health and social care are implicated in almost 30,000 excess deaths is one that needs further exploration. Given the relentless nature of the cuts, and potential link to rising mortality, we ask why is the search for a cause not being pursued with more urgency?"*

*I wish I could answer that question.*

*The stark fact is that maybe 30,000 people died unnecessarily in a year because of austerity. That is, they died because the government decided that trying to balance its books (which is [unnecessary](#) and [impossible in the UK at present](#)) was more important than their chance to live.*

*My question is a simple one and is this. How can anyone vote for a government that decided 30,000 people should die in pursuit of a balanced budget?*

*I have no answer to that.*