Causes of Death in the UK

Deaths from all causes (491,342)
Circulatory disease (159,779)
Cancer (140,497)
Medical error* (91,030)
Respiratory disease (67,559)
Digestive disease (25,230)
Mental disorders (18,021)
Accidents (11,917)
Endocrine/nutritional/metabolic disease (7,123)
Infectious/parasitic disease (5,750)
Musculoskeletal (4,141)
Falls (3,593)
Suicide (2,457)
Skin disease (1,849)
Accidental poisoning (1,537)
Congenital disease (1,261)
Blood/immune system disease (1,026)
Surgical/medical complications (462)
Assault (318)
Drowning (205)
Pregnancy & childbirth (63)
Electrocution/radiation (33)
Starvation (6)
DIETARY/HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS (0)
Meteorite strike** (0)

Number of Deaths


* Sari AB, Sheldon TA et al, Extent, nature and consequences of adverse events: results of a retrospective case note review in a large NHS hospital, Quality and Safety in Health Care, 2007; 16(6): 434–39. Figure based on 9.1 million hospital stays in England in 2005/6, excluding day case, maternity and mental health patients. By this data, 10%, or 910,303, of these patients suffered harm as a result of medical error; in 10% of these cases, or 91,030 patients, medical error contributed to their death.

** The chances of being hit by a meteorite, according to the British Natural History Museum, are “negligible”. It notes: “There have been no recorded deaths due to a meteorite fall.” [http://tiny.cc/om79] We include this figure for comparative/illustrative purposes.