## Potentially preventable hospitalisations of people with intellectual disability in New South Wales

To the Editor: With great interest we read the article by Weise and colleagues,[1] which presents the results of a retrospective cohort study that found higher age-standardised rates of potentially preventable hospitalisation in people with intellectual disability in New South Wales compared with the general NSW population. Given the great health inequality of people with intellectual disability, we acknowledge the authors' effort to conduct this valuable study. However, after reading the article, we were left with two questions.

First, to be able to interpret the results of this study, a clear description of the population characteristics of both groups is indispensable. Information about parameters such as age and sex of both populations and about the design of the database is of crucial importance. The absence of this information makes it difficult to get a good picture of the population studied and any limitations or biases that need to be taken into account. We recognise that this type of data is not always easy to collect, especially when working with large population databases. Given its importance for interpretation purposes, we see this as a crucial point of attention for future research.

Second, in this study, potentially preventable hospitalisations were identified using the definition in the National Healthcare Agreement, progress indicator 18.[2] However, in addition to this definition, the circumstances and the exact reason for hospital admission have not been explored, which makes it difficult to conclude whether all hospital admissions could actually have been prevented in clinical practice. Further research would therefore be of great added value to unravel the significance of the study findings by exploring the differences in the rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations to guide possible future reforms of primary and community health care.

In conclusion, the article provided us with important knowledge about the rates of potentially preventable hospitalisation of people with intellectual disability. However, the questions mentioned above need to be answered and further research should be conducted to allow a good interpretation of the results.

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1 Weise JC, Srasuebkul P, Trollor JN. Potentially preventable hospitalisations of people with intellectual disability in New South Wales. *Med J Aust* 2021; 215: 31–36. https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2021/215/1/potentially-preventable-hospitalisations-people-intellectual-disability-new

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Healthcare Agreement: PI 18. Selected potentially preventable hospitalisations, 2018. https://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/658499 (viewed Aug 2021). ■