

PRACTICE OBSERVED

Practice Research

Identification of underprivileged areas

BRIAN JARMAN

The Royal Commission on the National Health Service, the Black Report, the Royal College of General Practitioners' survey of primary health care in London...

Both the report of the joint Department of Health and Social Security and General Medical Services Committee Working Party on Underdoctored Areas...

It was necessary to justify the reason for choosing certain areas and to be able precisely to specify how each area was defined. When considering factors that affect a general practitioner's workload or pressure on his services...

London NW8 8EG BRIAN JARMAN, PHD, MRCGP, general practitioner

In 1980 Professor Donald Ashman, chairman of the London Health Planning Consortium Primary Health Care Study Group.

1706

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL VOLUME 286 28 MAY 1983

wrote to about 4000 general practitioners in the London area and a large number of organisations connected in some way or other with health services asking for their comments about primary care services in London...

Results

Table I gives the average score of each social and service factor and the total number of general practitioners entering a score for each factor. Other social and service factors mentioned were divided into 13 and 12 groups respectively...

TABLE I—Analysis of 1802 replies to general practitioner workload survey

Table with 3 columns: Social factors, Average score, No. of GPs scoring. Lists 13 social and 12 service factors with their respective scores and the number of GPs who provided data for each.

TABLE II—Other factors mentioned in 1802 replies to general practitioner workload survey

Table with 2 columns: Social factors, No. of GPs scoring. Lists 23 additional factors such as 'Travel complaints', 'Poor psychiatric services', 'Lack of hospital facilities' with the number of GPs who mentioned each factor.

The following were mentioned fewer than 10 times: few telephones, pain stemmers by media, high cost of housing, family planning needs, repeat prescriptions, severe weather conditions, single homeless, particular needs of over 75s, suicides of patients, declining moral standards, travelling people, gypsies, tinkers, working mothers, street drunkenness in Northern Ireland, higher percentage of female patients.

TABLE III—Average scores of social factors for general practitioners in different parts of United Kingdom

Table with 3 columns: Urban, Rural, Rural Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Lists 13 social factors with their average scores in each of these five regions.

factor. The average standard deviation in average score for each of the 115 family practitioner committee areas in the United Kingdom was 0.95, the lowest being 0.60 for proportion of elderly living alone...

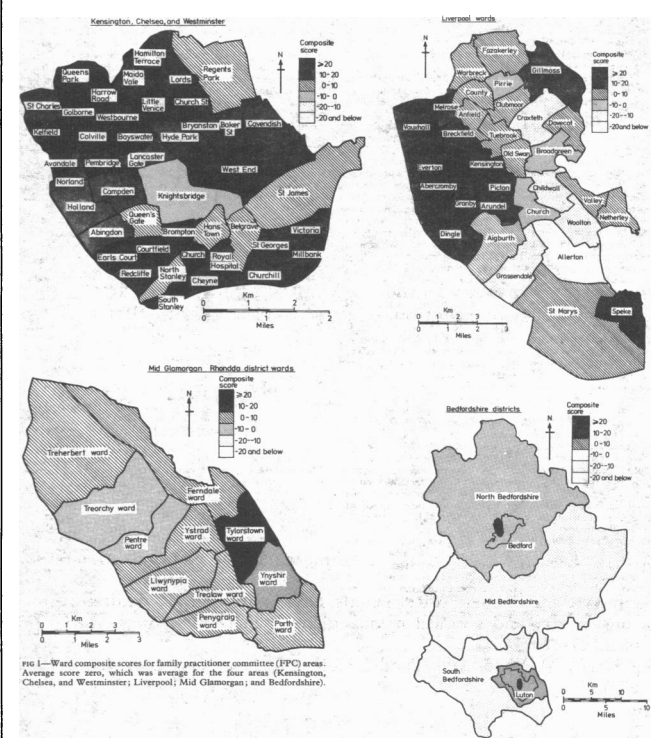


FIG 1—Ward composite scores for family practitioner committee (FPC) areas. Average score zero, which was average for the four areas (Kennington, Chelsea, and Westminster; Liverpool; Mid Glamorgan; and Bedfordshire).

responsibility for providing health services, whereas service factors can be altered—for example, in areas where social factors show a high workload.

1708

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL VOLUME 286 28 MAY 1983

in rural areas by means of rural practice payments. There is no allowance for the difficulties of travelling through traffic and parking in urban areas, and therefore omission of the variable means that workload is underestimated in urban areas. Using the remaining 10 social variables and 1971 Census data, composite workload scores were calculated for each of the London boroughs...

Discussion

A method has been described whereby census data may be used to define areas that have higher than average concentrations of social factors that general practitioners nationally have weighted according to the degree to which they increase their workload or pressure on their services. If it is thought desirable to give extra support to general practitioners in areas where they are under the greatest pressure owing to the social characteristics of the community they serve...



FIG 2—Enumeration district composite scores for the western half of Kennington, Chelsea, and Westminster family practitioner committee area. Average score zero (average for that committee area only).

