

City's heart care tops list

[SARAH DUNN](#)

Last updated 13:00 21/08/2013

Share



John Pomeroy is carried to the Nelson Marlborough rescue helicopter after suffering a heart attack at his Dovedale home in May 2012.

Cardiologist Andrew Hamer says Nelson Hospital has the lowest rate of acute admission for heart failure in New Zealand.

Forty-two people were admitted to Nelson Hospital in the the year dating from 2011 to 2012, giving it a rate of 0.4 admissions for every 1000 people. Gisborne's Tairāwhiti had the highest rate of acute admissions with 1.8 for every 1000. Heart failure symptoms include ankle swelling, breathlessness and often follow previously diagnosed heart problems. Dr Hamer, leader of the New Zealand Cardiac Network, said he was unable to draw a direct line of causation between the hospital's policies and the low rates, but high rates of readmission were linked to "low and slow" intervention at a primary care level.

"If we manage patients well and aggressively when they come in with a small heart attack or a big heart attack, then there are fewer patients out there getting into trouble with heart failure later." He said the difference in cardiac care was an inequity that New Zealand needed to address, saying health dollars were more effectively spent on treating cardiac events aggressively at the "time of jeopardy" to avoid the burden of chronic disease later.

Dovedale couple Mary and John Pomeroy are familiar with the kind of complications that can arise from heart problems. In June, Mrs Pomeroy had an operation to have the first Biosorb stent put into her heart, while Mr Pomeroy was flown to Nelson Hospital in a critical condition to have an emergency stent operation in May last year.

He is now under palliative care at the Nelson hospice. Mrs Pomeroy said she first started to think about her heart problems after a heart attack 16 years ago, after which she was diagnosed with diabetes. She went in for a checkup six weeks after the attack, and was put on

a one-year course of drugs which prevent blood clots. "For years I just pottered along and then I just started getting a little bit of chest pain." Mrs Pomeroy was referred to Wellington Hospital for her first stent in 2010, and when the chest pain came back last year, she was given the first of the new dissolving Biosorb stents. She said she was told it would be out of her system within one or two years, leaving her arteries functioning normally.