WENNBERG INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE
SPRING POLICY MEETING 2018

On the overuse of U.S. acute care hospitals in managing chronic illness

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74 NRP Smarter Health Care National Research Programme

SSPH+ SWISS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

THE Dartmouth INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH POLICY & CLINICAL PRACTICE

Supply-Sensitive Care...

includes physician visits, hospitalizations for medical (non-surgical) conditions, lab tests and imaging exams.

Intensity of care, in particular inpatient care, varies greatly among areas and hospitals and is closely correlated with the supply of hospital facilities and medical (non-surgical) physician labor per capita

At issue is the intensity or frequency of use of these services in managing chronic illness such as cancer, congestive heart failure and COPD over the course of illness.

The intensity of inpatient care is measured using an easy-to-compute index

The Hospital Care Intensity (HCI) index =

Physician inpatient visits + inpatient days
per number of patients with chronic illness
(standardized to the national average)

Summarized by regions (or hospitals).

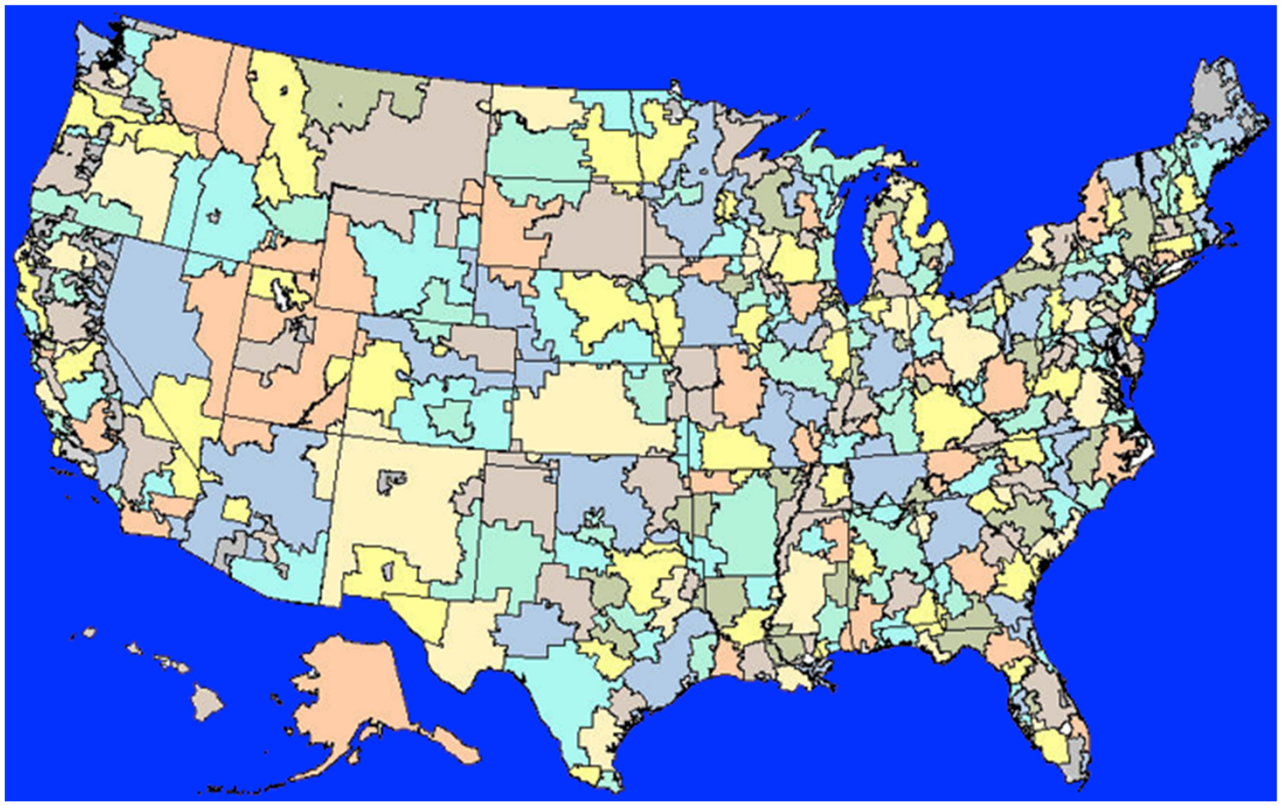
Is more care better?

Study population:

Fee for Service Medicare beneficiaries decedents

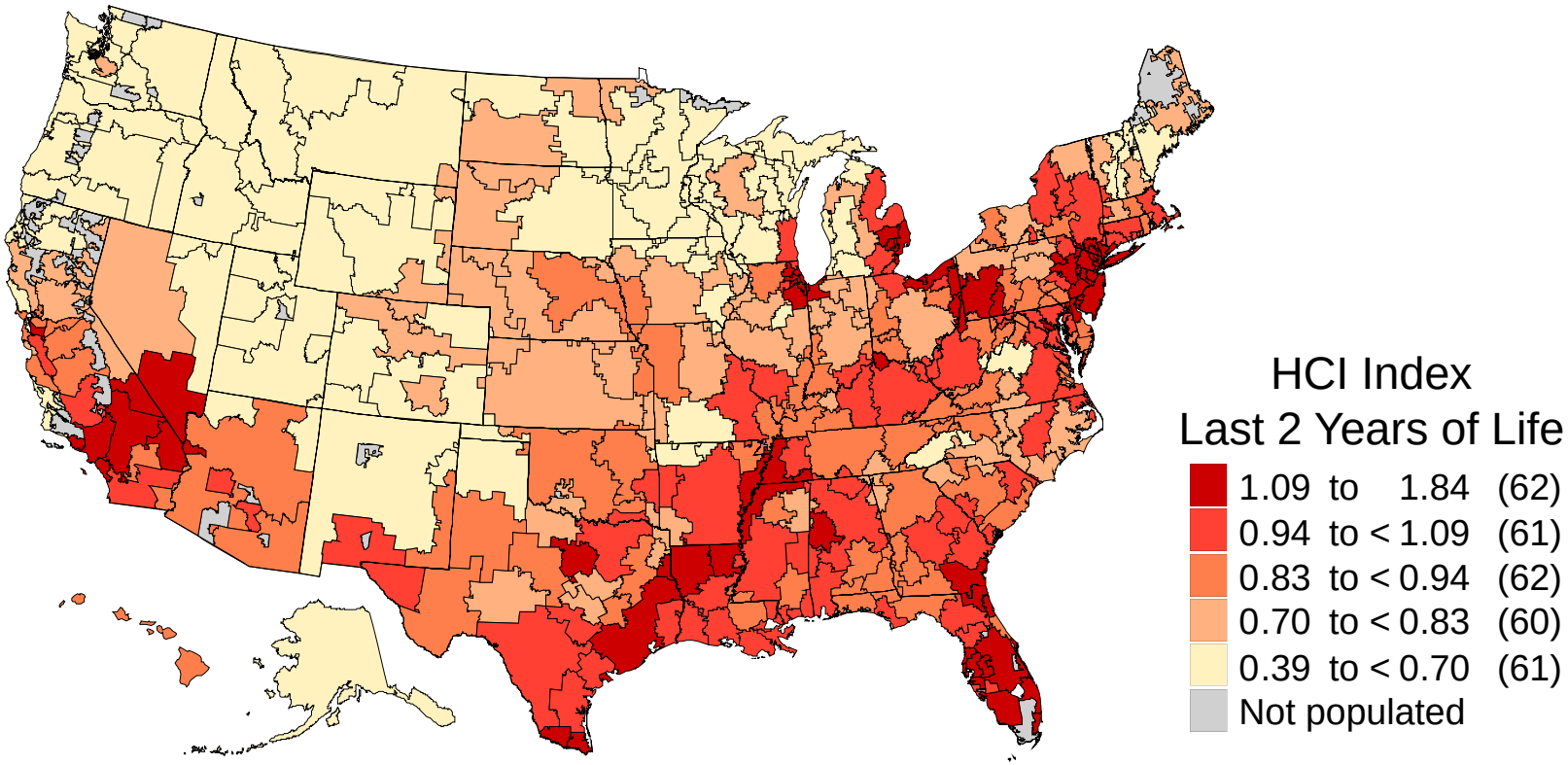
Each with one of 9 chronic illness in two years prior to death

The Dartmouth Atlas Project
Hospital Referral Regions (n=306):



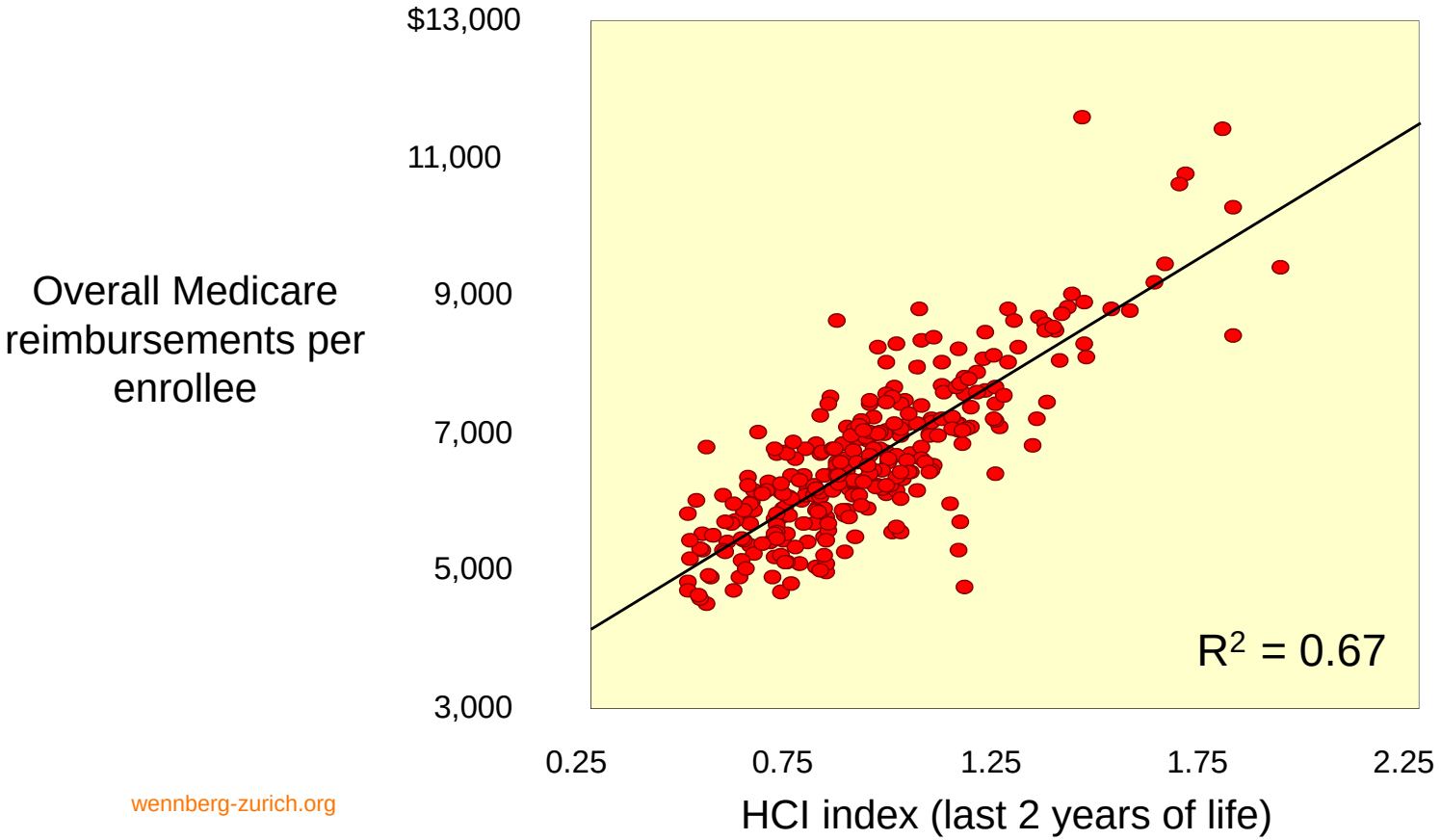
Which Rate is Right?

Variation in intensity of inpatient care (HCI Index) in managing patients with chronic illness among HRRs in last two years of life



IS MORE BETTER? MEDICARE PROGRAM SPENDING:

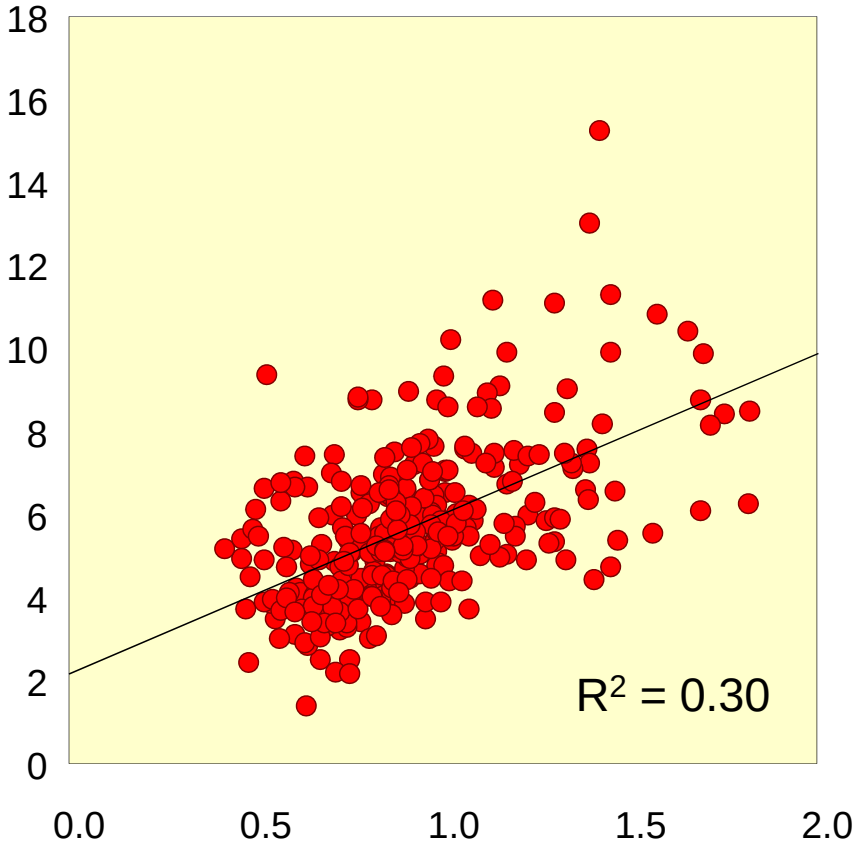
Greater intensity of inpatient care in managing chronic illness is associated with greater overall spending



IS MORE BETTER? THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE:

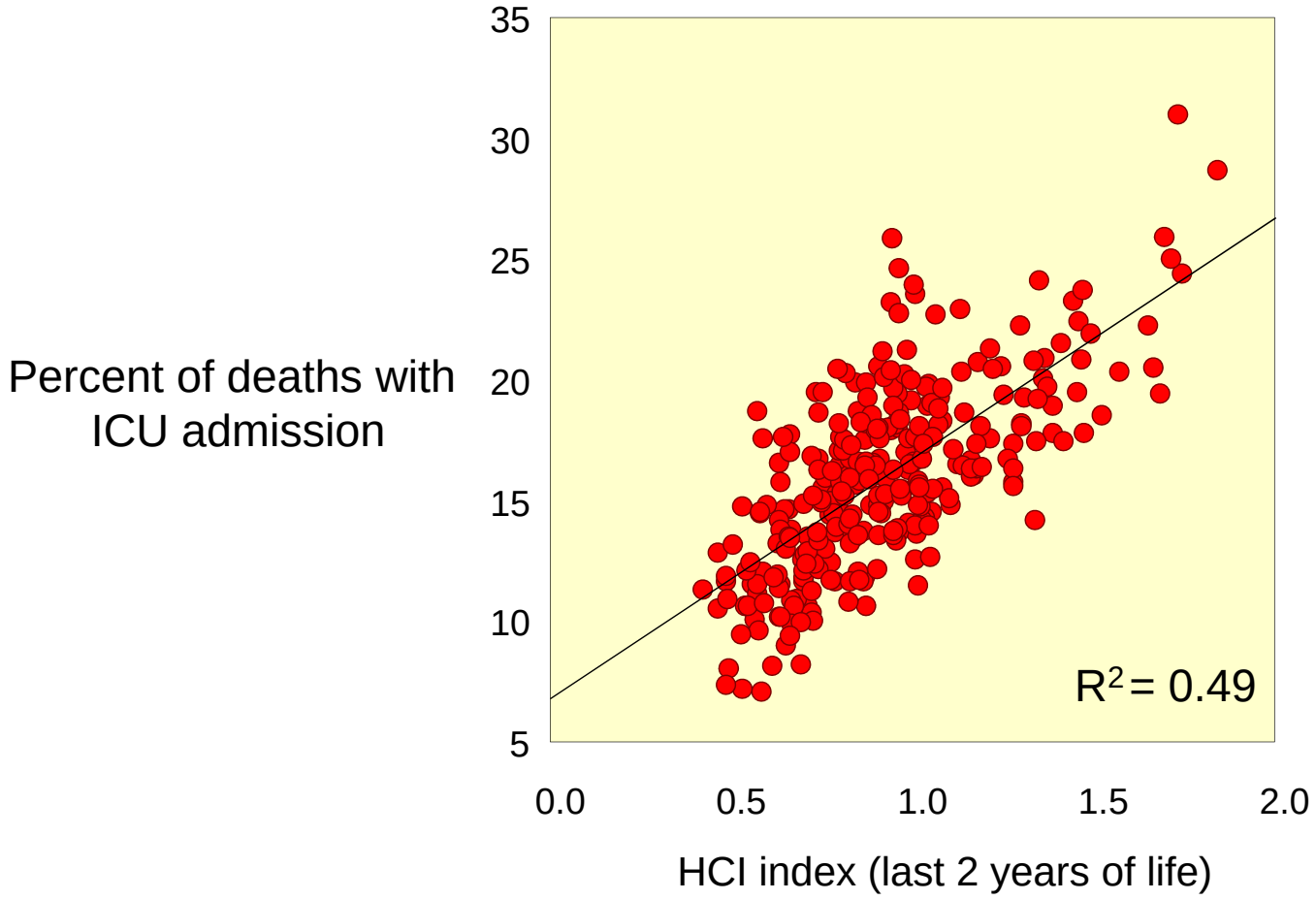
Hospitalized patients in regions with high intensity inpatient care rank their hospitals less favorably

Percent of patients that would **not** recommend their hospital to friends or family



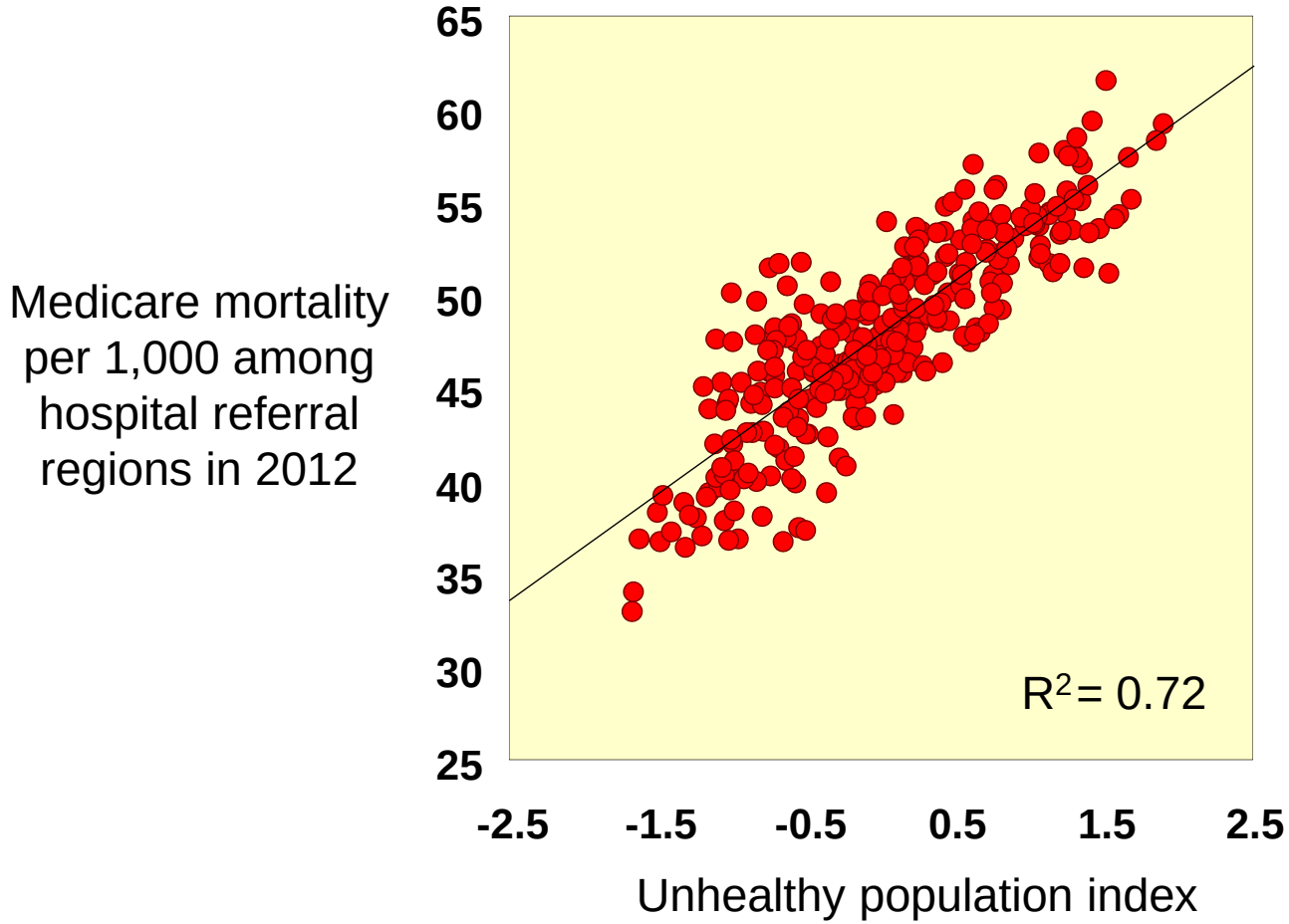
IS MORE BETTER? The Patient Experience:

Patients living in regions with greater hospital care intensity are more likely to die in an Intensive Care Unit



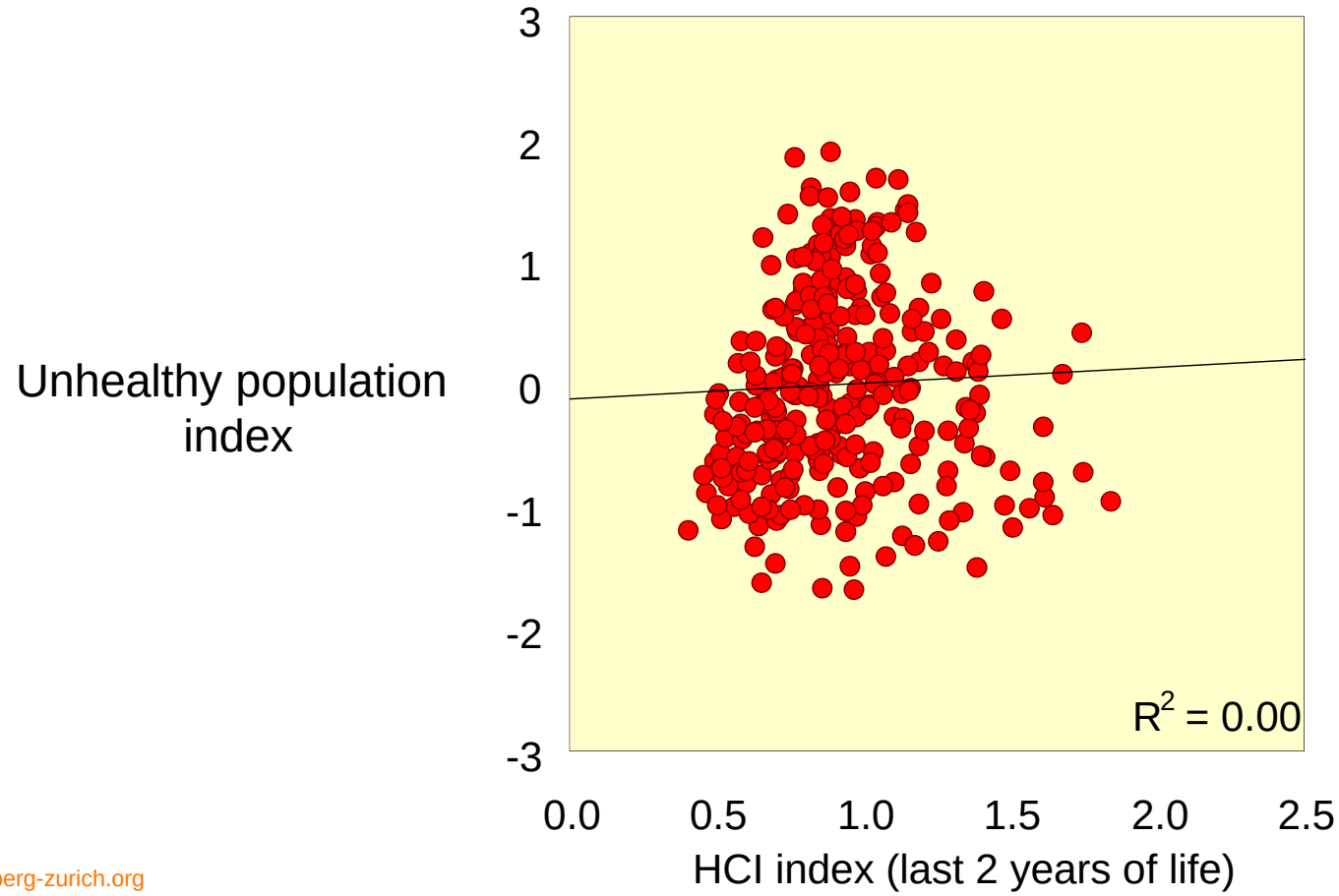
A BASIC FACT:

Behavioral risk factors (smoking, poor diet, low activity) are strongly associated with Medicare mortality



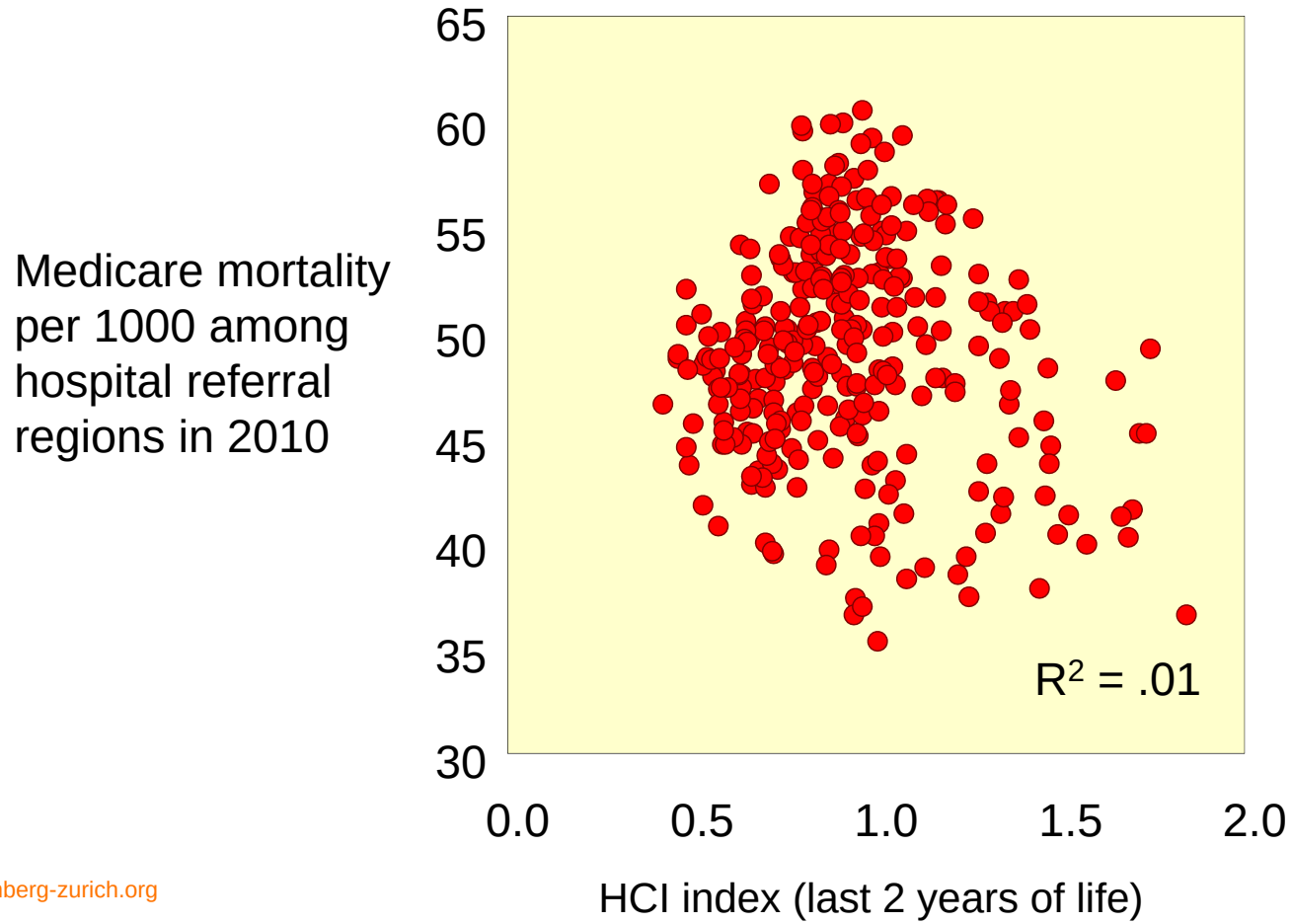
IS MORE BETTER? THE POPULATION HEALTH

There is no association between intensity of inpatient care and behavioral risk factors for chronic disease (smoking, poor diet, sedentary)



IS MORE BETTER? POPULATION HEALTH

Intensity of inpatient care for those with chronic illness has no association with population mortality



Conclusions

The HCI index is a useful indicator of likely overuse of inpatient care in managing chronic illness among regions and hospitals in the United States.

Higher intensity of inpatient care is associated with higher spending and worse patient experience.

Regions with higher care intensity do not have better behavioral risk factors lower mortality.

The pattern of variation reported in OECD Atlas studies suggest that similar results may be seen elsewhere.

Thank you!

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