

Variation and equity: how  
far are we willing to go?

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# Always been variation...

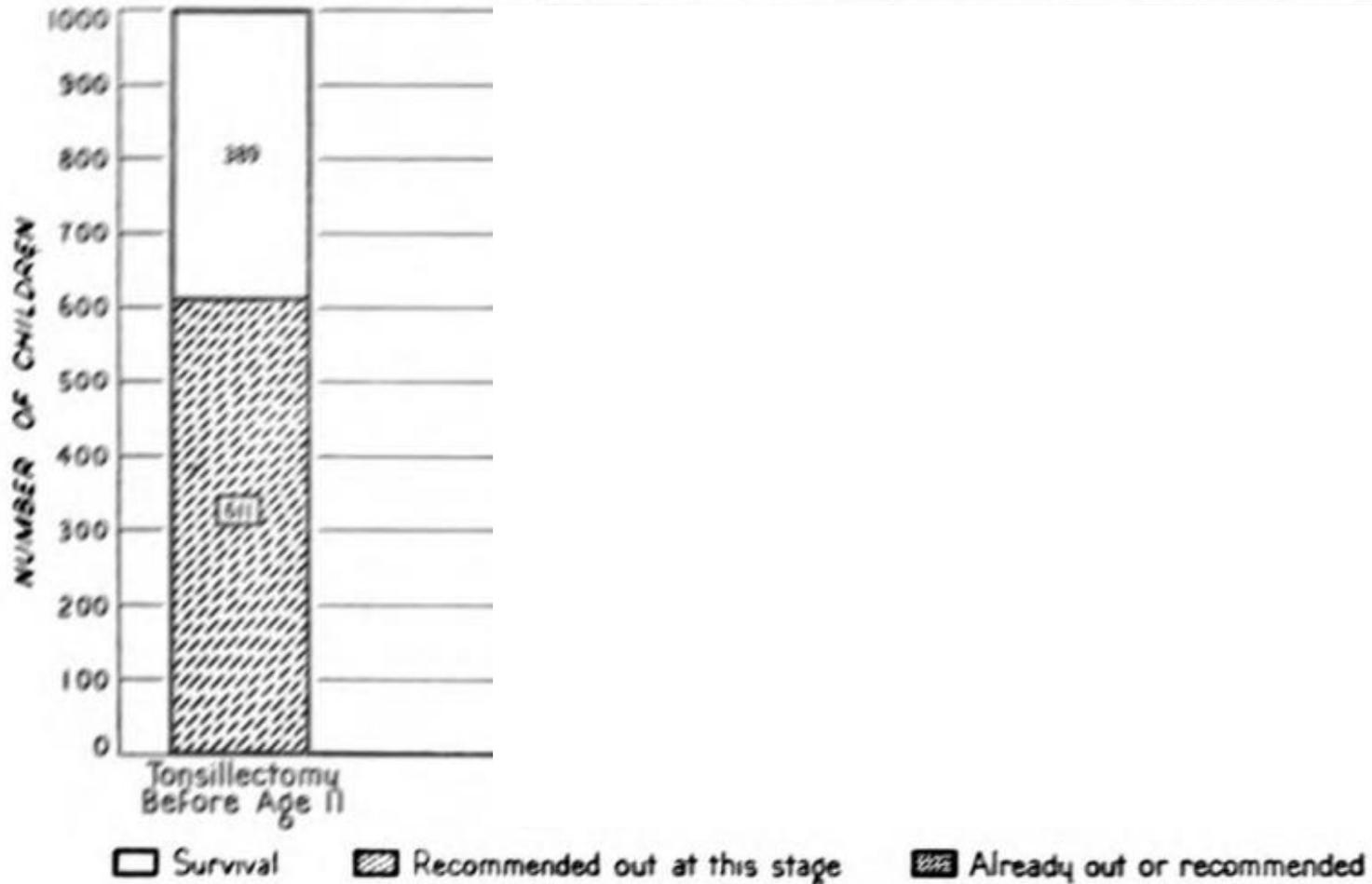
## **Tonsillectomy rate in elementary school children (1931)**

- Margate eight times Ramsgate
- Enfield six times Wood Green
- Bath five times Bristol
- Guildford four times Reigate
- Salisbury three times Winchester

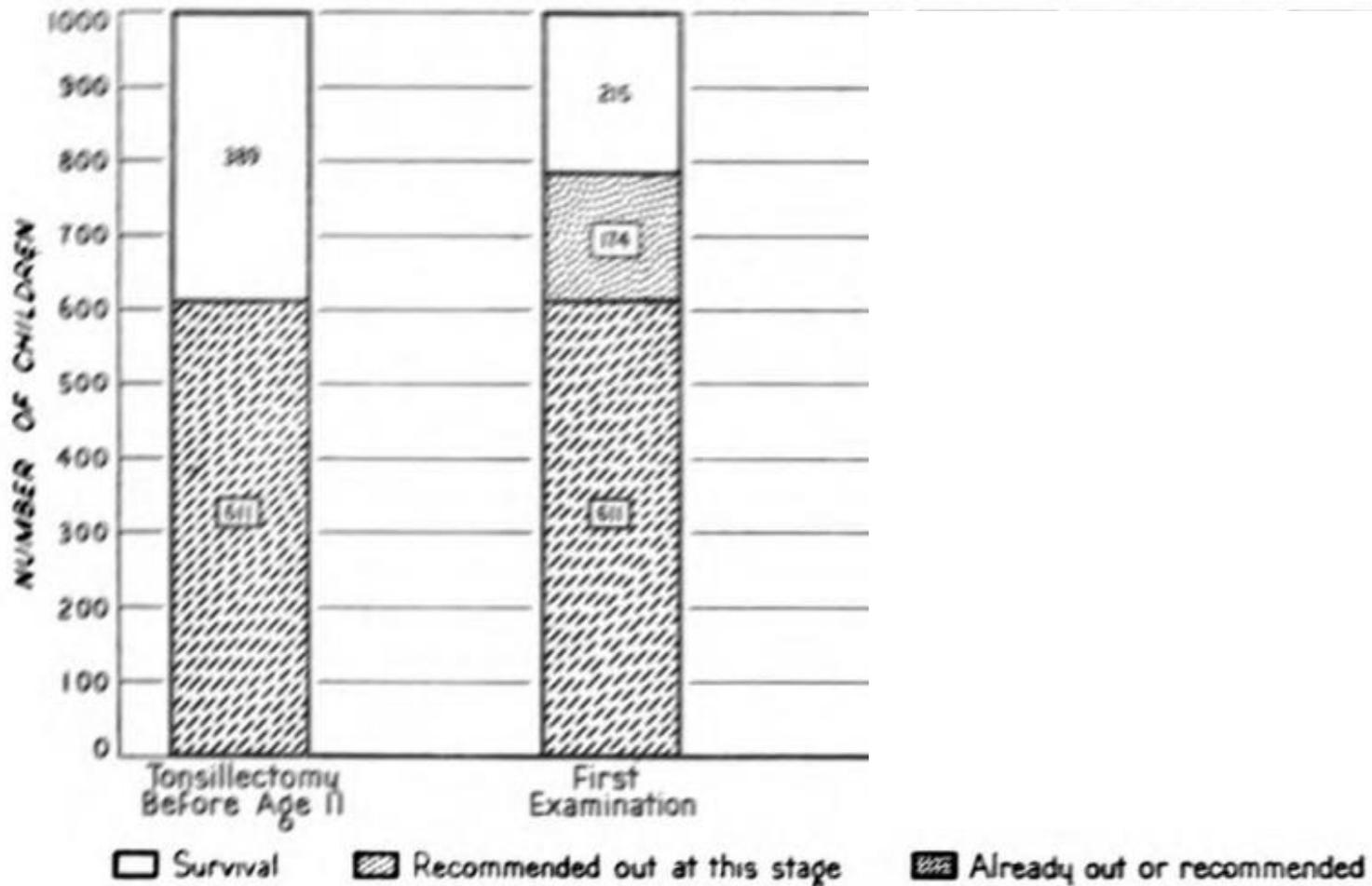


J Alison Glover  
(1874-1963)

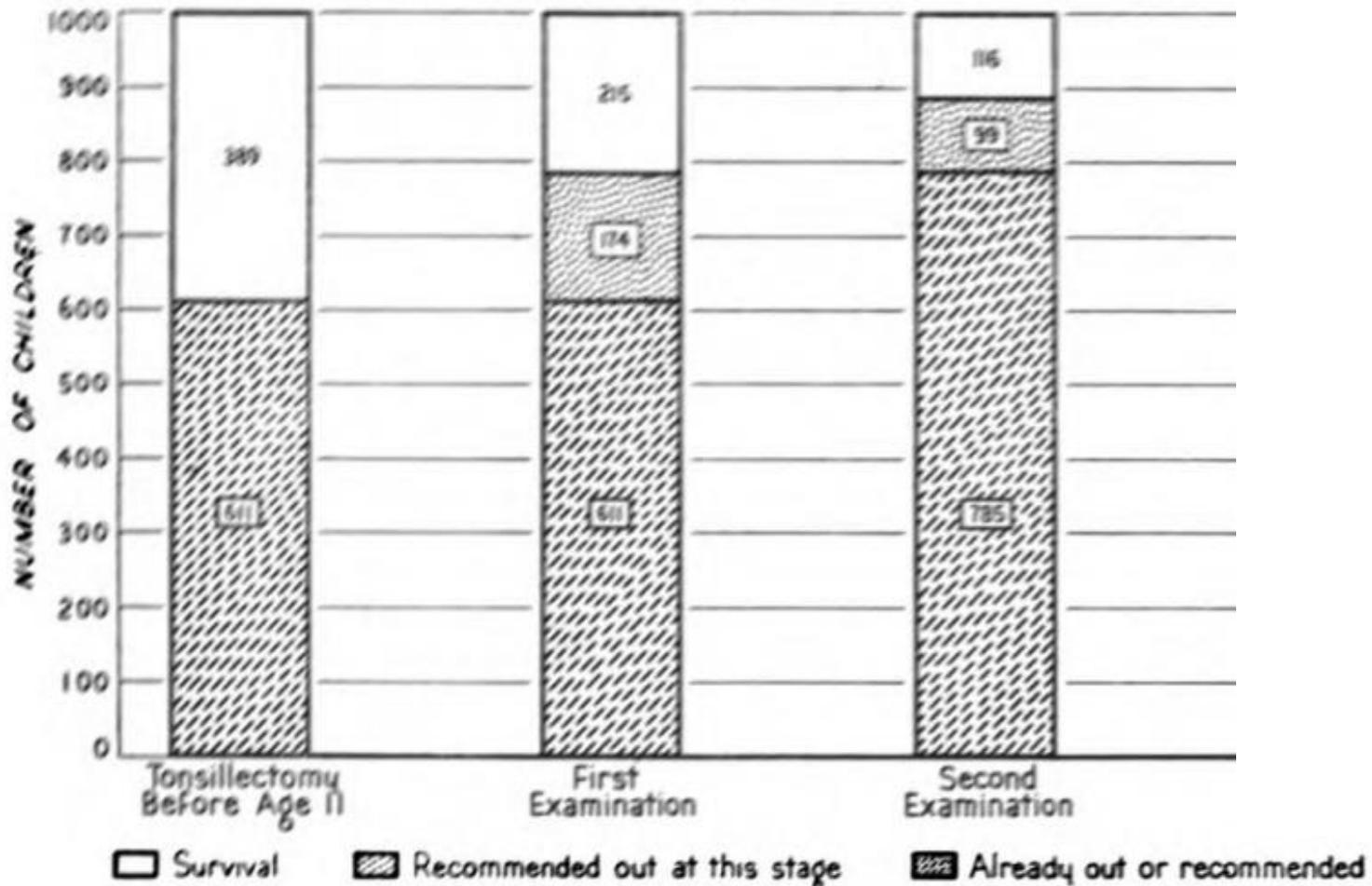
# THE THEORETICAL SURVIVAL OF TONSILS AFTER MEDICAL EXAMINATION



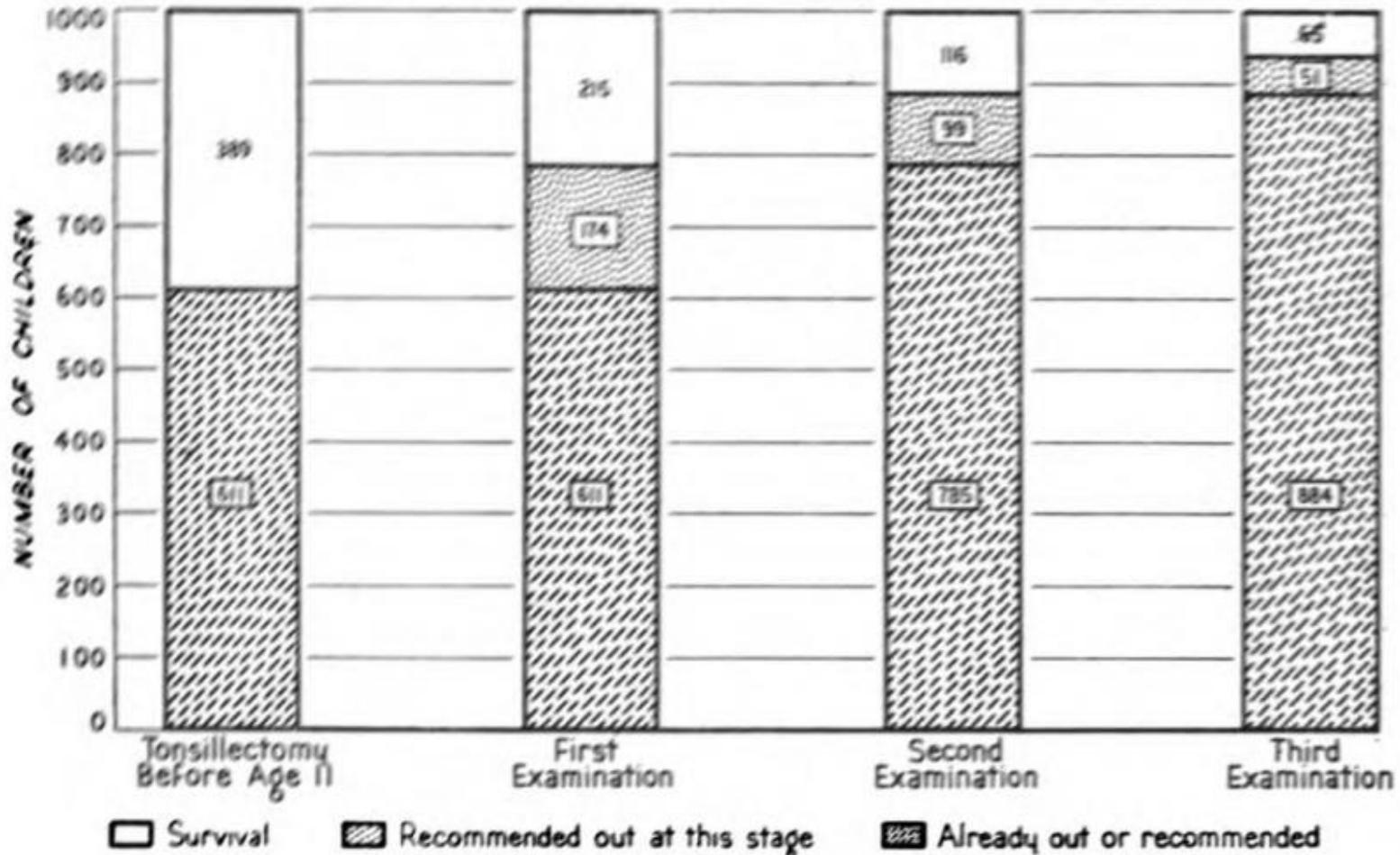
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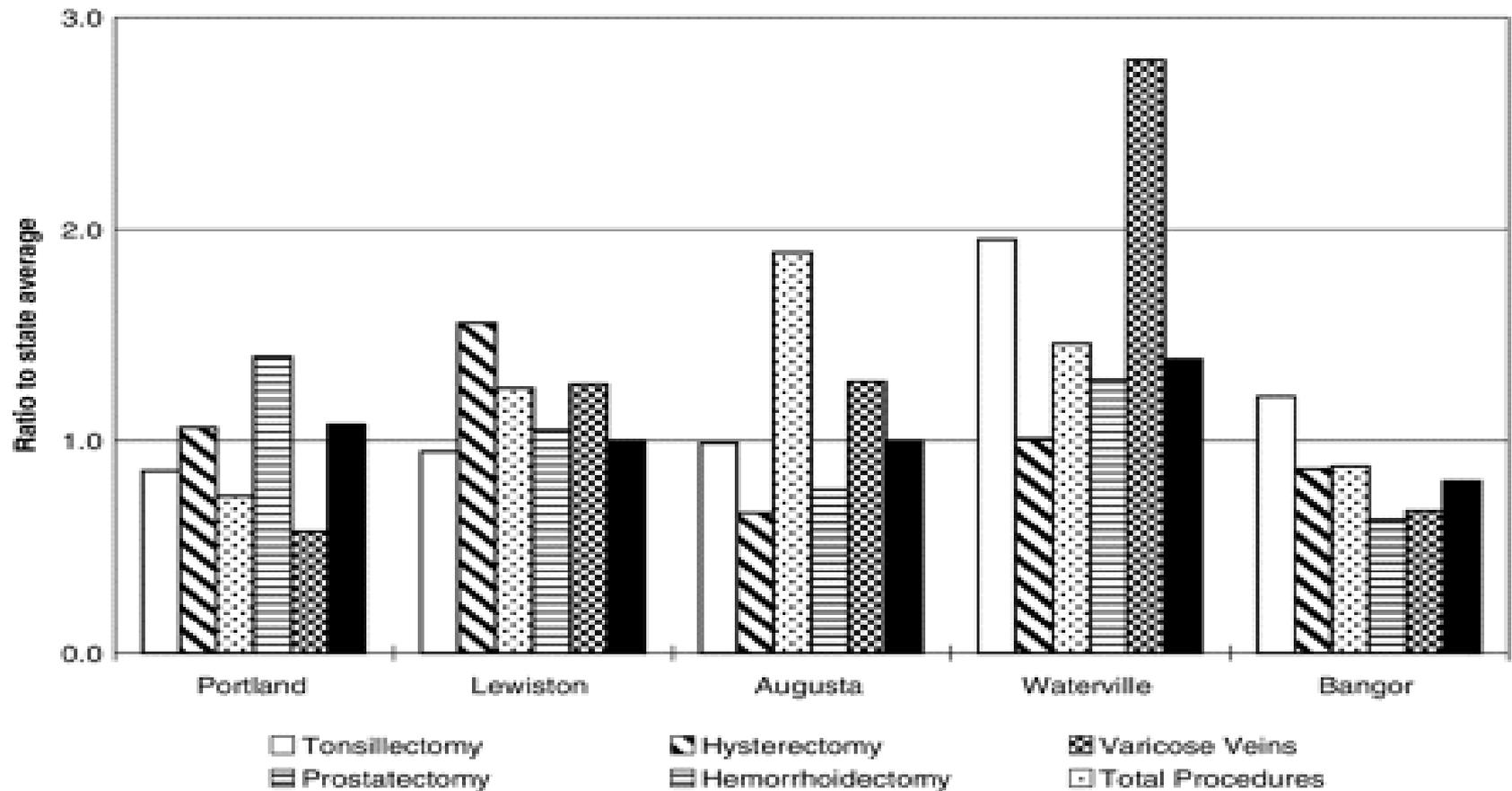
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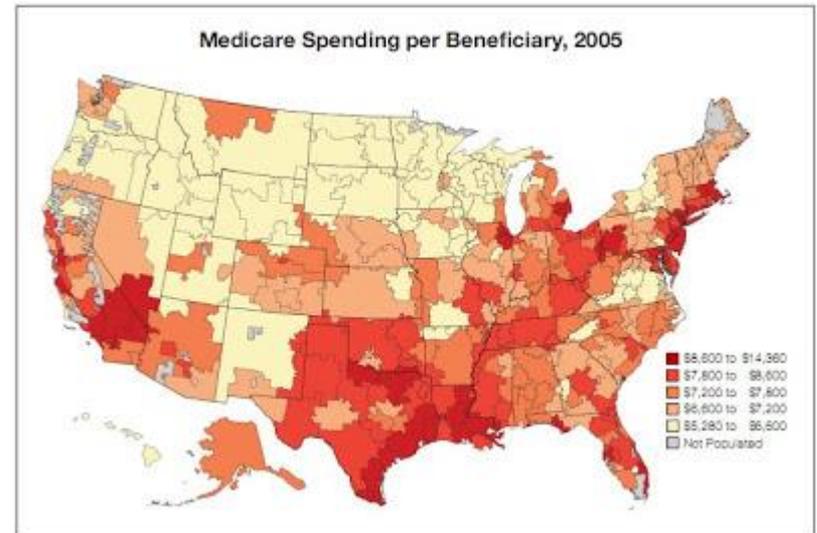


## The surgical signature for the five most populous hospital service areas in Maine, 1975



Wennberg J, Gittelsohn A. Health Care Delivery in Maine I: Patterns of Use of Common Surgical Procedures. *J Maine Med Assoc* 1975;66:123 -30

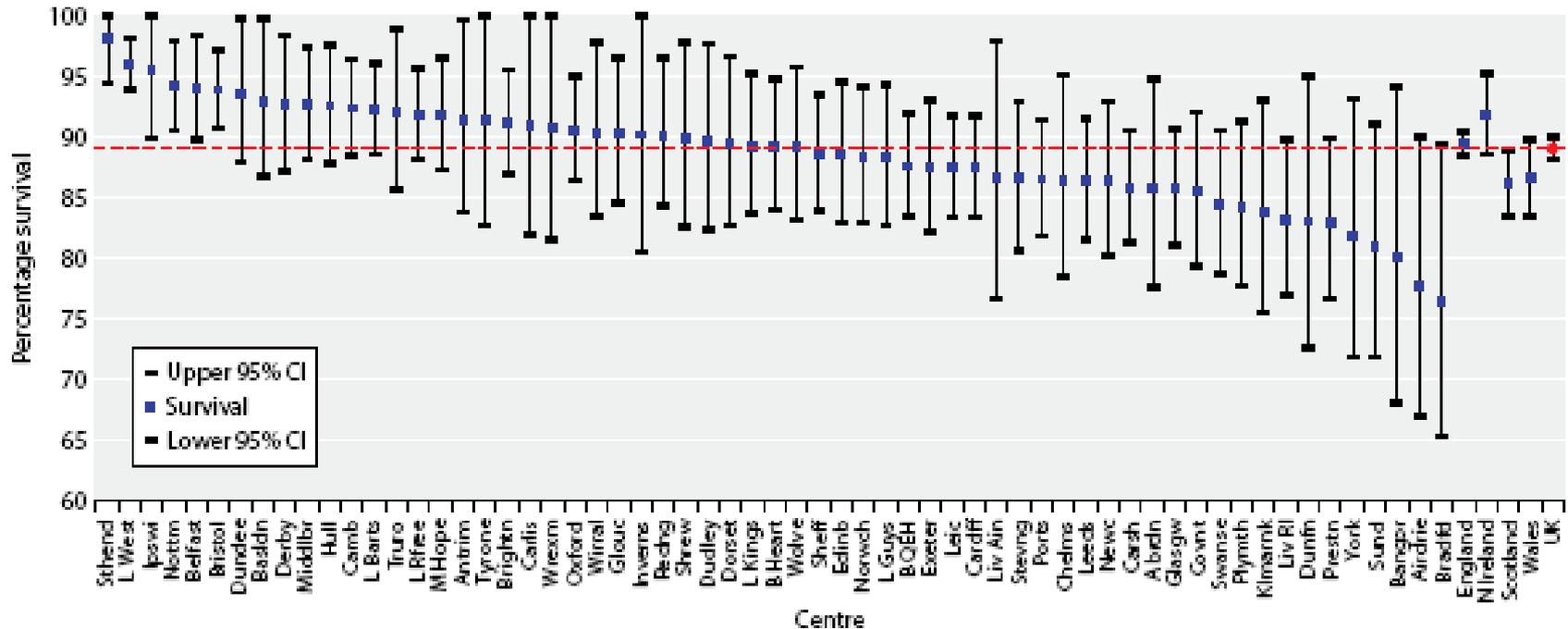
## Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation 2015



Interpretation of some variation is straightforward...

## Outcomes

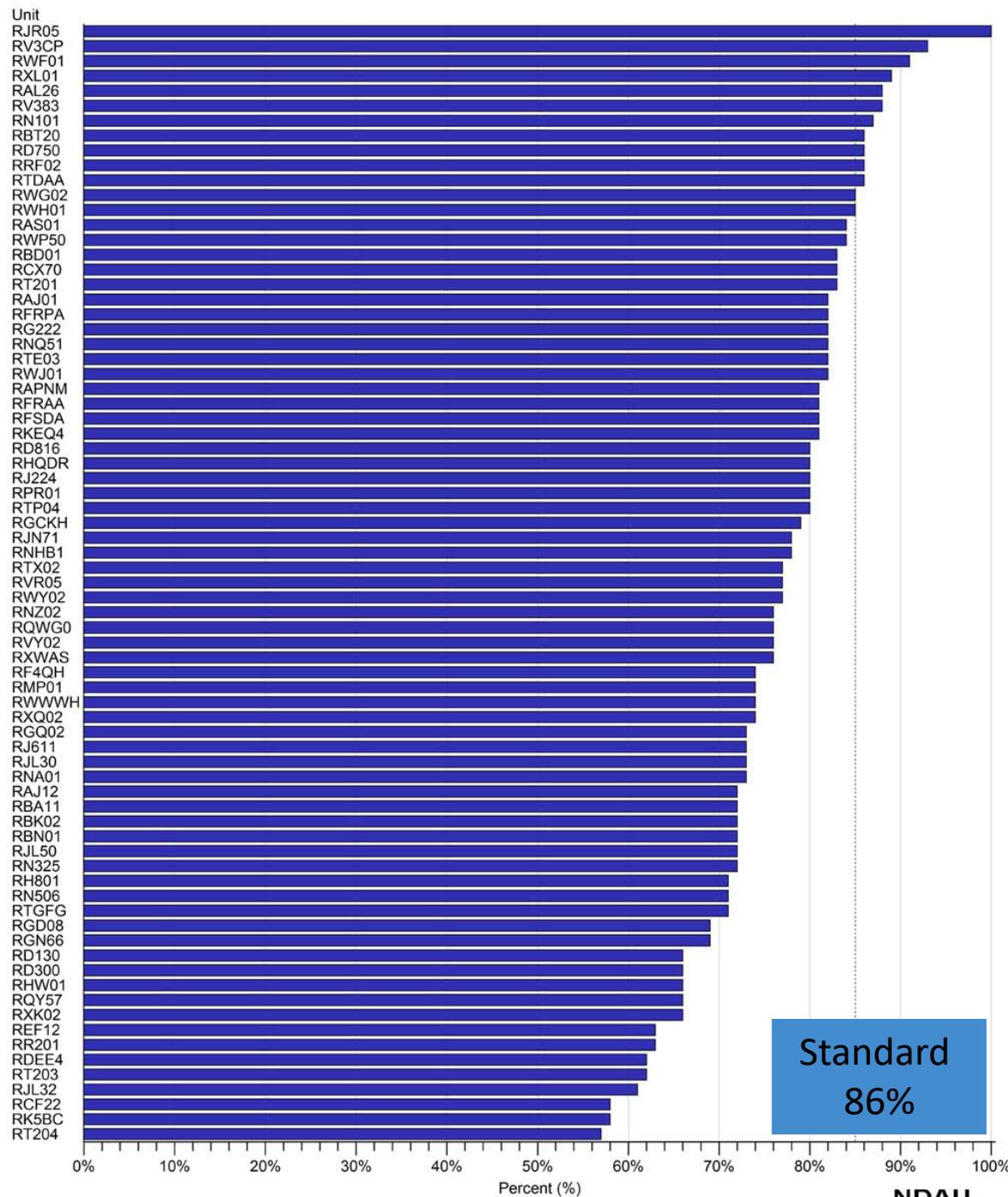
Renal replacement patients: one year survival (after 90 days)



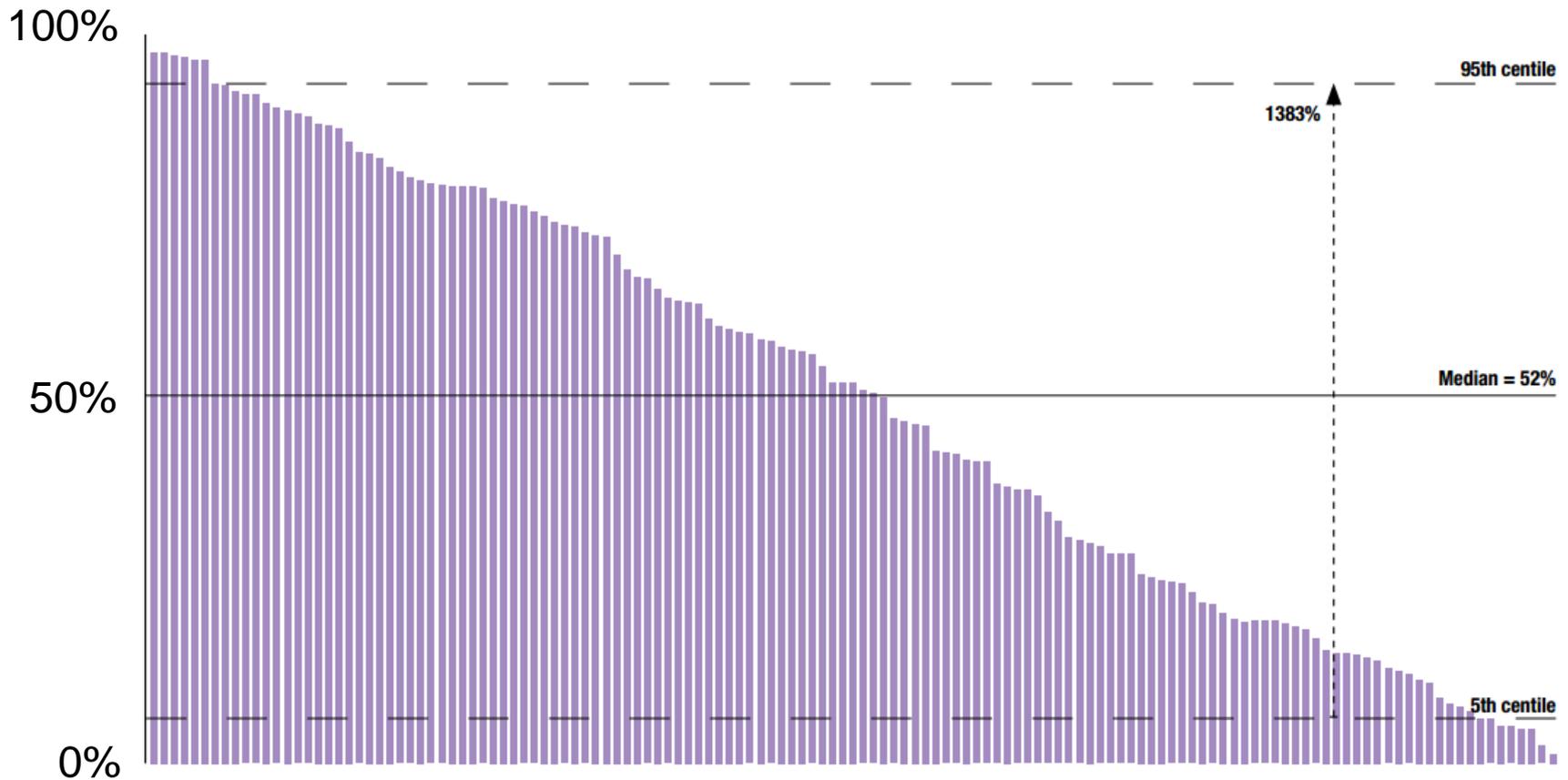
# Processes

## Neonatal care in UK hospitals (2011)

Proportion of mothers  
expecting preterm  
delivery receiving  
antenatal steroids



# Total hip replacement: proportion cemented in each Trust (England 2013-14)



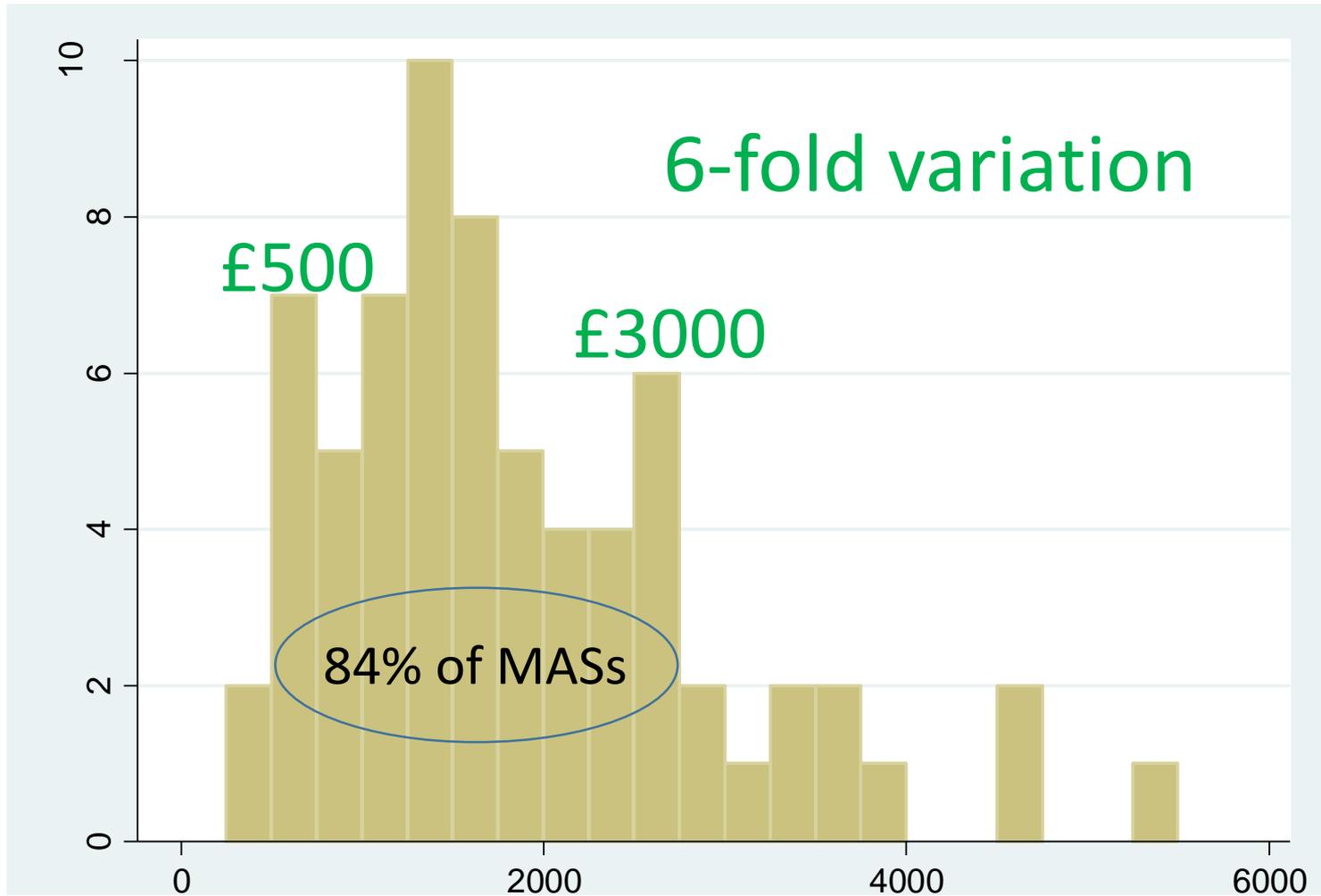
GETTING IT RIGHT FIRST TIME

Trusts

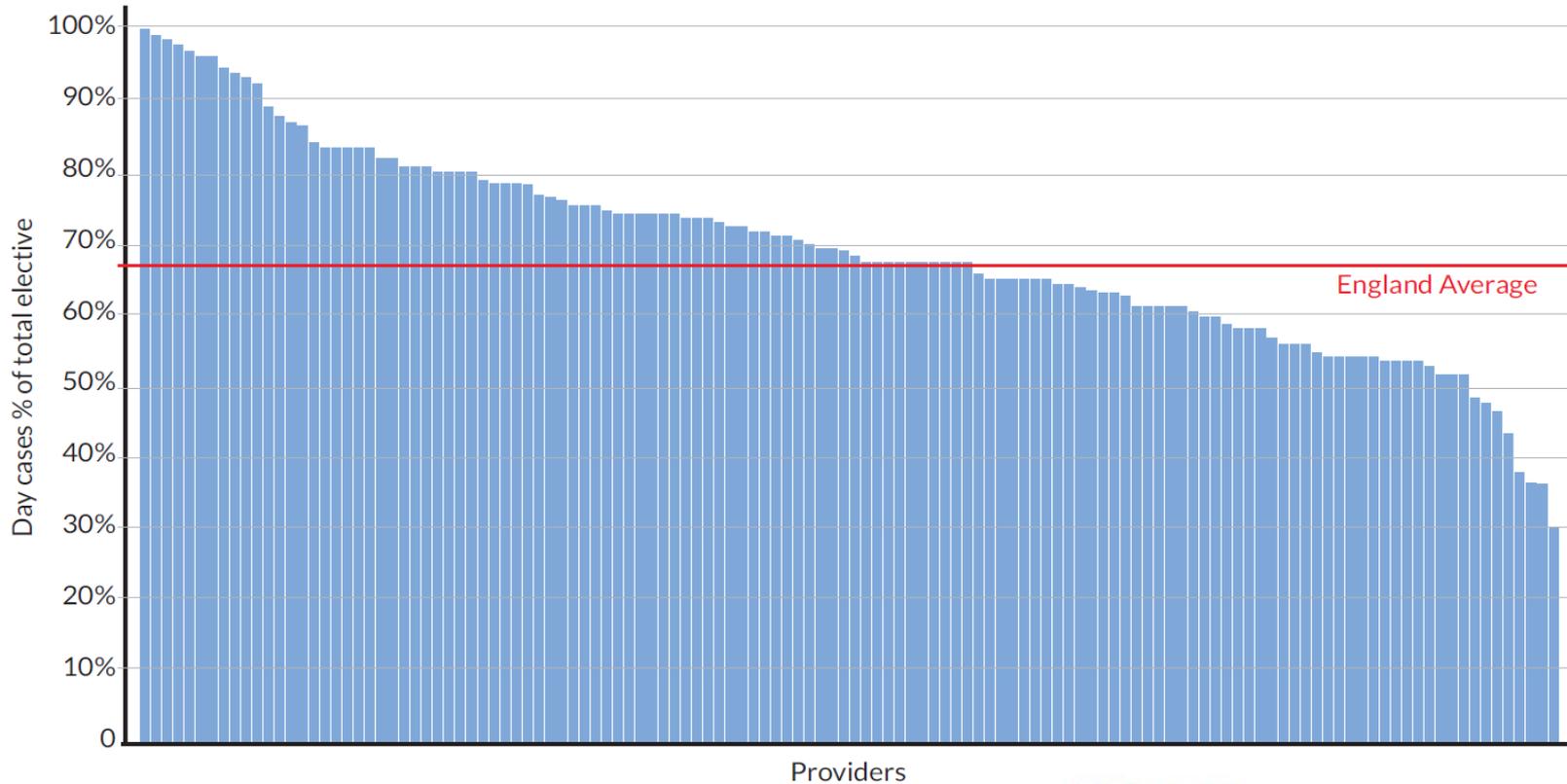
Improving the Quality of Orthopaedic Care within the National Health Service in England

# Costs

Memory clinics: cost (£) for first year (2015)



# ENT elective procedures: proportion undertaken as day cases (2015-16)



**Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery**  
GIRFT Programme National Specialty Report

by **Andrew Marshall** BSC, MBBS, FRCS  
GIRFT clinical lead for Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery

But policy/practice implications of some variation not so clear...four reasons

- Lack of consensus on best practice (clinical uncertainty)
- Encouraging creativity and social entrepreneurship
  - Falls rapid response teams
  - Integrated community mental health services

# Reducing emergency admissions: falls rapid response



East Midlands Ambulance Service   
NHS Trust

13.6% of 999 calls are for falls  
50% are taken to A&E

Falls Rapid Response Team introduced

28% taken to A&E  
£377K hospital cost saving pa  
Fewer admissions to residential care  
Overall savings £1.8m pa

# Reducing hospital use: mental health care



2013: citizens, carers, social care, voluntary sector, primary care, public health and mental health trust



Denis O'Rourke, assistant director for integrated commissioning in mental health



Supports 400 people a month

43% reduction in referrals to secondary mental health care

Reduction in number entering residential care

- Local context and constraints
  - Secondary care (Louella Vaughan)
  
- Population health need necessitates variation in local services
  - Children's centres (Rebecca Rosen)

# Discussion: challenges for future policy & practice

- ‘Unwarranted variation’ is not acceptable...  
but how much warranted variation is acceptable?
- How should innovation and creativity be managed/regulated (?encouraged) if it increases variation?
- Are we making best use of variation in improving services?