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# City finds being poor is hazardous to your health

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The gap between the rich and poor is growing when it comes to health in the Big Apple, according to a report released yesterday by city Controller William Thompson.

The number of people hospitalized for heart disease, cancer and diabetes is far higher in low-income neighborhoods than in wealthy ones, he charged.

Hospitalization rates for diabetes more than doubled in five low-income neighborhoods in the Bronx and East Harlem between 1990 and 2005, while increasing 83% citywide.

During that same period, the hospitalization rate for heart disease spiked in eight low-income neighborhoods by at least 40%, the report found. Citywide, the rate increased about 20%.

And while the number of people hospitalized for cancer dropped in 42 neighborhoods, the smallest decreases - those of less than 10% - were in seven low-income neighborhoods.

Similarly, asthma hospitalization rates dropped citywide between 1995 and 2005, but the East Harlem rate - 1,059 per 100,000 people - was still five times higher than the rate for the nearby tony upper East Side.

"While in many neighborhoods in the city, people are getting healthier, in other neighborhoods, the poor are suffering," Thompson said.

He suggested opening clinics in drugstores and supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods, because "all too often people use the emergency room as their doctor."

Ronda Kotelchuck, executive director of the Primary Care Development Corp., endorsed the controller's recommendations, saying, "By offering the right kind of care, at the right time and the right place, we see that we can truly improve the lives of so many New Yorkers and reduce the disparities they now experience."

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