

Mobile health clinics: Saving lives and money

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Every \$1 invested in mobile healthcare for the medically disenfranchised saves \$36 in combined emergency department costs avoided and value of life years saved. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Medicine* suggest that 'health vans' decrease both the incidence and economic burden of preventable diseases, for a net profit to the healthcare system.

Nancy Oriol, from Harvard Medical School, worked with a team of researchers to carry out an economic analysis of the return of investment a model mobile health clinic might provide. She said, "Mobile health clinics provide an alternative portal into the healthcare system for people who are underinsured, uninsured or who are otherwise outside of mainstream healthcare. They act as providers of last resort and are an essential component of the healthcare safety net".

The researchers' model showed that, by reducing the incidence of costly visits to the [emergency department](#) and providing early, preventive medicine, a health van can be highly cost-effective. According to Oriol, "The implications of this 36:1 return of investment should promote the effectiveness of the program model among healthcare policy-makers, who should support those healthcare practices that provide the greatest healthcare benefit for every healthcare dollar spent".

More information: Calculating the return on investment of mobile healthcare, Nancy E Oriol, Paul J Cote, Anthony P Vavasis, Jennifer Bennet, Darien DeLorenzo, Phillip Blanc and Isaac Kohane, *BMC Medicine* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcmed/

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