

Post-stroke language impairment adds thousands to medical costs

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Stroke-related language impairment adds about \$1,703 per patient to medical costs the first year after stroke, according to research reported in *Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association*.

Researchers retrospectively examined the records of 3,200 South Carolina [Medicare patients](#) who had [ischemic strokes](#) in 2004 and found:

- Twelve percent (398 patients) had aphasia or language impairment.
- [Medicare payments](#) for those with aphasia averaged \$20,734 per patient vs. \$18,683 for those without it — an 8.5 percent increase.
- Aphasia patients were older and had more severe strokes.
- Aphasia patients stayed in healthcare facilities 6.5 percent longer and had higher rates of illness and death.

"These findings are important because dramatic changes are occurring in healthcare reimbursement, specifically imposed caps on Medicare reimbursement for outpatient speech language pathology and physical therapy," said Charles Ellis Jr., Ph.D., lead author and associate professor of Health Sciences and Research at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. "Although the current reimbursement cap is \$1,870 for these therapies, the financial burden of the cap remains a major limiting factor to access long-term rehabilitation for patients with persisting aphasia."

Annually, about 100,000 people who suffer a stroke will be left with language deficits due to aphasia.

Provided by American Heart Association

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