

# Researchers argue in defense of the annual check-up

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(HealthDay)—Arguments urging doctors to abandon routine physical

exams are based on insufficient evidence, according to an Ideas and Opinions piece published online Jan. 5 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

David U. Himmelstein, M.D., of the City University of New York School of Public Health at Hunter College in New York City, and Russell S. Phillips, M.D., of Harvard Medical School in Boston, write that the case against the regular check-up has been largely based on a review of 14 trials that concluded that annual visits do not reduce either illness or risk of death.

In the new paper, the authors point to another systematic evidence review that focused solely on 33 more recent studies of periodic health evaluations that consisted "only of the history, risk assessment, and a tailored physical examination." This competing review showed that the periodic [health](#) exam improved delivery of some recommended preventive services, and may lessen patient worry. Some patients, especially those in vulnerable or high-risk groups, could benefit from routine visits, the review found.

"It's penny wise and pound foolish to say we should stop people from building a relationship with their doctor before they're sick," Himmelstein told *HealthDay*.

**More information:** [Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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