

Emergency but not elective hospital admissions linked to faster memory and thinking decline

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Researchers in Chicago have investigated the link between hospital admissions and memory and thinking problems. Existing research indicates that older people are at an increased risk of both short- and long-term memory and thinking problems after being admitted to hospital. In this study researchers at the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Centre at Rush University compared the risk associated with urgent or emergency admissions and elective stays that might be more common for routine procedures. The researchers found that non-elective hospitalisations were associated with a faster rate of cognitive decline from before hospitalisation, while elective hospitalisations were not.

A group of 930 older adults enrolled in the Rush Memory and Aging Project (MAP) in Chicago took part in annual memory and thinking tests and clinical evaluations. The researchers acquired information about participants' past hospitalisation by linking 1999-2010 health insurance claim records with the data from research project. After taking factors like age, sex, education, and length of hospital stay into account, they found that only urgent hospital admissions were related to faster [cognitive decline](#).

Dr Rosa Sancho, Head of Research at Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

"Medical treatment often involves some element of risk and doctors always need to weigh up the need for a medical procedure against any

possible negative consequences. This research helps to provide a clearer picture of a link between hospital stays and changes in memory and thinking skills. While these findings might be reassuring for people planning to go to hospital for a routine procedure, they should in no way deter people from seeking any urgent treatment they need. Given one quarter of [hospital](#) beds in the UK are occupied by someone with dementia, it's important to understand the impact of that stay on an individual and develop approaches to limit any negative effect on their long-term health."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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