

Freeing up hospital beds—how children can leave hospital sooner

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Credit: Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

Experts have found that some children with severe infections requiring intravenous (through the vein) (IV) antibiotics, can safely have these at home instead of in hospital. This will help children to leave hospital earlier, which will free up hospital beds and will allow kids to recover at home with their families.

A world-wide [systematic review](#) into the delivery of IV antibiotics by nurses visiting the child in their own [home](#) looked at whether this approach to treatment was as good as in [hospital](#) in terms of safety, cost and patient satisfaction.

The study published in the *Lancet Infectious Diseases* looked at studies across Australia and the globe where [children](#) were given IV antibiotics at home and compared them to those given in hospital. The results showed that patients and families preferred to be at home and that it was cost effective for the healthcare system, freeing up beds for other patients.

The authors of the systematic review were A/Professor Penelope Bryant and Dr Naomi Katz from Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI).

First author A/Professor Bryant who is the paediatric representative of the National Hospital-in-the-Home Society, said the study was an important step in trying to get children home sooner.

"Many children in hospital are on IV antibiotics. Most parents would prefer their children to be at home if it is safe to do so. This study gives the evidence to support doctors to treat their patients with IV antibiotics at home while keeping them under daily medical review.

If we can get children safely home even one day earlier, then that's a good thing," she said. "Children do better psychologically at home, they get better faster, they are less at risk of hospital acquired infections, and dynamics are improved for the whole family," Co-author Dr Naomi Katz said.

The review showed that selected patients with a variety of infections including skin infections, appendicitis, [urinary tract infections](#), chest infections in cystic fibrosis and infections in cancer can be treated at home.

"It is likely that there are many patients currently being treated in hospital who could be treated at home, both in Australia and worldwide,"

said A/Professor Bryant. "And it's not just IV [antibiotics](#) – other traditional hospital interventions could also be given outside the hospital environment. To see just how far-reaching into improving healthcare this type of program could be, further research is needed. We are currently looking at trying to prevent some patients from having to be admitted to hospital at all."

Provided by Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

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