

The toll of dysphagia

December 18 2017, by Bill Snyder

Besides studies in stroke patients, little is known about the impact of dysphagia or impaired swallowing in the general patient population.

To find out, Dan Patel, M.D., and colleagues conducted a review of the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project National Inpatient Sample.

Reporting last month in the journal *Diseases of the Esophagus*, they estimate that [dysphagia](#) affects 3 percent of adult inpatients in the United States 45 years old and older.

Compared to other inpatients with similar characteristics, those with dysphagia spent nearly four days longer in the hospital, were nearly three times more likely to require post-acute care services and were 1.7 times more likely to die in the hospital.

The cost of their inpatient care was also 33-percent higher. That works out to be an additional \$16.8 billion in inpatient costs between 2009 and 2013, the researchers concluded.

"Promising early interventions are available," they wrote. "It behooves clinicians and hospitals to recognize and treat dysphagia early."

More information: D A Patel et al. Economic and survival burden of dysphagia among inpatients in the United States, *Diseases of the Esophagus* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/dote/dox131](https://doi.org/10.1093/dote/dox131)

Provided by Vanderbilt University

Citation: The toll of dysphagia (2017, December 18) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-12-toll-dysphagia.html>

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