

# Elderly housing with supportive social services can reduce hospital use, study finds

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Investing in affordable housing that offers supportive social services to senior citizens on Medicare has the potential to reduce hospital admissions and the amount of time needing inpatient hospital care by

better managing chronic health conditions, according to a Rutgers study.

The study was recently published in the journal *Health Affairs*.

While prior research has shown that housing conditions affect [health outcomes](#) of the elderly, there is limited information about the effect support services—including physical and psychological assessments; counseling and advocacy; health education; wellness and physical activity and socialization programs;—have on the well-being of seniors and the costly hospital services for Medicare beneficiaries.

The research was led by Michael Gusmano, an associate professor of health policy at Rutgers School of Public Health and member of the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research. The study examined whether a program provided to elderly Medicare beneficiaries through a nonprofit, community-based group in Queens, New York, would reduce hospital use, including hospital discharges for ambulatory care-sensitive conditions that, if managed well, should not require admission to a hospital.

According to Gusmano, research showed that discharge rates and length of hospital stays were lower in Medicare beneficiaries who lived in the housing environment that offered supportive social services, as compared to seniors in the same neighborhood living without these amenities. This suggests that continued investment into housing with supportive social services can reduce costly hospital stays and decrease spending for vulnerable older adults, he said.

"These findings are consistent with the claim that housing programs of this sort help people stay healthy and, perhaps more importantly, help them receive health and social services that allow them to manage their chronic conditions," said Gusmano. "By receiving timely and appropriate support in the community this vulnerable population may be able to

avoid hospitalization or at least use it less often."

**More information:** Michael K. Gusmano et al, Medicare Beneficiaries Living In Housing With Supportive Services Experienced Lower Hospital Use Than Others, *Health Affairs* (2018). [DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2018.0070](https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.0070)

Provided by Rutgers University

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