

The cost of waiting in emergency departments

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Wait times in U.S. emergency departments are increasing. A new study published in *Economic Inquiry* indicates that prolonging the wait time in the emergency department for a patient who arrives with a serious

condition by 10 minutes will increase the hospital's cost to care for the patient by an average of 6%, and it will increase the cost to care for moderately severe cases by an average of 3%. There were no increased costs associated with waiting among relatively healthier patients.

The findings suggest that longer [emergency department](#) wait times exacerbate costs.

"Most people appreciate that long waiting times hurt patients, but our results show they also contribute to a growing economic concern: rising healthcare costs. One problem is feeding another," said co-author Lindsey Woodworth, Ph.D., MA, of the University of South Carolina.

More information: Lindsey Woodworth et al, JUST A MINUTE: THE EFFECT OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT WAIT TIME ON THE COST OF CARE, *Economic Inquiry* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/ecin.12849](#)

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