

Adding social workers to care teams can cut hospital admissions for veterans

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(HealthDay)—An initiative to add social workers to rural primary care

teams increases social work encounters among veterans and reduces hospital admissions and emergency department visits among high-risk patients, according to a report published in the April issue of *Health Affairs*.

Portia Y. Cornell, Ph.D., from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and colleagues examined the impact of an initiative to add [social workers](#) to rural primary care teams in the Veterans Health Administration. The effect was measured on three main outcomes: patients' use of social work services, hospital admissions, and emergency department visits.

The researchers found that with the introduction of a social worker, among all veterans who received care, there was a 33 percent increase in social work encounters. After introduction of a social worker, among [high-risk patients](#), there was a 4.4 percent decrease in the number of veterans who had any acute hospital admission and a 3 percent decrease in those with any emergency department visit.

"Policy makers and administrators in other health care systems may take note of the unique contributions of social workers in addressing patients' social needs," the authors write. "Results from the first three years of the Social Work PACT [Patient Aligned Care Teams] Staffing Program suggest that addressing patients' social needs is an integral component of delivering effective primary care."

More information: [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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