

## Eli's Hospice Insider

### Hospice News: Hospice Utilization Saves Medicare ER, Hospital Costs

#### Hospice use cuts ER visits dramatically in last month of life.

Besides all the good that hospice does for a patient and her family, the benefit also saves beneficiaries and the Medicare program money on emergency department costs. So finds a new study in the June issue of Health Affairs.

In a 14-year study of 65-year-olds who died, the authors found that 51 percent of the 4,518 decedents visited the ED in the last month of life, and 75 percent in the last six months of life, according to the abstract

for the study. A total of 77 percent of the patients seen in the ED in the last month of life were admitted to the hospital, and 68 percent of those who were admitted died there.

In contrast: "Patients who enrolled in hospice at least one month before death rarely visited the emergency department in the last month of life," found the study.

Bottom line: "Policies that encourage the preparation of patients and families for death and early enrollment in hospice may prevent emergency department visits at the end of life," concludes the study available at <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/31/6/1277.abstract>.