

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: Study Claims Link Between Live Discharge Rate, Profitability

The feds have another reason to focus on this statistic.

You may want to take a second look at your live discharge rates, because the feds might be doing so as well, thanks to a new study.

Researchers from the **David A. Winston Health Policy Fellowship** and the **University of North Carolina** used Medicare claims data from 2012 and 2013 and cost reports from 2011 to 2013 "to explore relationships between hospice-level financial margins and live discharge rates among freestanding hospices," says the abstract for the study published in July's issue of Health Affairs.

The results: "Adjusted analyses showed positive and significant associations between both operating and total margins and hospice-level rates of live discharge," the abstract says. "One-unit increases in operating and total margin were associated with increases of 3 percent and 4 percent in expected hospice-level live discharge rates, respectively."

In other words, the higher a hospice's live discharge rate, the higher its Medicare profit margin.

"For more than a decade, hospices have steadily increased the rate at which they discharge patients before death," the study authors say. "Although certain live discharges are consistent with high-quality care, regulators have expressed concern that some hospices' desire to maximize profits drives them to inappropriately discharge patients."

See the abstract at <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/36/7/1291.abstract>.