

Eli's Hospice Insider

News: Dementia Patients Receiving Increased Hospice Benefits

Policymakers could drive a wedge between patients and their needed services.

A growing number of nursing home residents with dementia are tapping the hospice benefit, but that trend could have a downside.

So says a new study by researchers at **Brown University** and **Hebrew SeniorLife/Deaconess Medical Center** in Boston, who found that "the proportion of residents with dementia who benefited from Medicare hospice care nearly tripled -- and the duration of care more than doubled -- between 1999 and 2006," according to a release.

"Because hospice care provides important medical benefits to patients with dementia, including more attentive assistance with feeding and medication, the increased use of the benefit is good news," Brown gerontologist **Susan Miller**, the study's lead author, says in the statement.

But it could be bad news if policymakers clamp down on the benefit for nursing home residents with dementia, Miller worries.

"Initiatives focusing on reducing long hospice stays could disproportionately and adversely affect the timing of hospice referral for persons with dementia," Miller writes. "It is critical that the creation of any new policy explicitly consider the challenges inherent in the timing of hospice referral for nursing home residents dying with dementia."