

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Clinical Research: NEW TOOL COULD REDUCE HOSPITALIZATION OF NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

Clinicians often wish they had a crystal ball to predict which residents with pneumonia can be treated in the facility and which ones require a hospital admission. A new predictive tool developed by **David Mehr**, at **the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine** and by **Ellen Binder**, at **Washington University School of Medicine**, may be able to do just that.

The instrument evaluates the nursing home resident's risk of dying from a lower respiratory tract infection by examining several variables, including white blood count, body mass index, pulse rate, ADL status and deterioration in mood.

The researchers recently tested the tool in 36 Missouri nursing facilities. Residents with the lowest scores on the instrument showed the lowest mortality rates, according to a study published in the Nov. 21, 2001 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (<http://jama.ama-assn.org>). If independently validated, the instrument could help clinicians make more effective treatment decisions in caring for residents with LRIs.

Keeping residents out of the hospital also prevents transfer trauma and hospital-acquired infections.