How much does a charitable hospice in the UK reduce admissions to NHS acute hospitals?

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Background

- The NHS in England deals with over 1 million patients every 36 hours.
- Children's hospices in the UK are however funded predominantly by charitable donations and are often struggling to raise funds.
- The aim of this study was to give an estimate of saving by NHS acute hospitals by children and young people with palliative care needs staying at a charitable hospice.
Martin House Hospice

Respite for babies and children with limiting conditions and their families (9 bedrooms)

Symptom control for teenagers and young adults (6 bedrooms)

End of life 24/7 Medical telephone on call

Respite Community Bereavement

Emergency Psychology Sibling, parent, grandparent groups, Lodgefest
Statutory hospice funding remained almost static since 2010, while costs doubled.
**Methods**

Retrospective note review
All residential stays
2 months

**Inclusions**

Any days’ care where the child’s medical needs were such that the child could not have been looked after at home and CYP/family opted for hospice rather than hospital care

As only one person was analysing the notes an overly cautious underestimation approach was taken
Methods

Exclusions
- Any days where it was felt that families could ‘possibly’ have stayed at home were discounted (and it is likely that some of these would have resulted in hospital stays)
- Planned hospice respite stays even if the child received significant symptom control management
- ‘Stepdown from hospital’ stays where the child could have been deemed medically fit for discharge even though additional training and support was of benefit
78 days of care in the hospice - would have resulted in hospital stays

Children from geographical areas from 6 CCGs (UK funding regions)

**Results**

- Emergency symptom management
- End of life care
  - Gradual deterioration
  - Withdrawal of intensive care support for end of life care
- Active management of acute deterioration within confines of what hospice can offer
Limitations

Overly cautious inclusion as only one reviewer
Other savings observed but not included in this review
- Hospice medical telephone on call support and hospice community nursing support
- avoiding attendances at NHS General Practice surgeries or Emergency Departments
Study only 2 months in duration
In addition to hospices providing valuable respite for children with life-limiting conditions and their families, the service reduces bed occupancy in acute NHS hospitals.

More research is needed to assess the full impact of savings.

This has potential implications for funding for children’s hospices at a time when many hospice charities are struggling.