

Palliative Care: Key Studies on Cost Savings

The table below lists key studies and review articles that examine the effect that the addition of palliative care has on overall patient costs. While results vary, the addition of palliative care typically either reduces overall costs or is cost neutral, while improving patient quality of life.

Study	Setting	How Palliative Care Effected Costs
May 2016 ¹ Health Affairs	Inpatient hospital patients with advanced cancer in 6 sites in NY, OH, VA, WI	Receipt of a palliative care consultation within 2 days of admission was associated with 22% lower costs for patients with a comorbidity score of 2–3 and with 32% lower costs for those with a score of 4 or higher.
Macmillan 2020 ² Journal of Palliative Medicine	Patients with a palliative care referral at a university-affiliated community-based urban hospital	Significant association between reduced length of stay and hospital charges when consults for palliative care were initiated within 24 hours of hospital admission regardless of underlying disease. Patients who received an early referral had median total hospital charges of \$38,600 – compared to \$95,300 for the control group.
Hua 2020 ³ JAMA	Patients who died during hospitalization in New York	Implementation of palliative care at a hospital was associated with a 10% reduction in intensive care unit use for patients who died during their hospitalization.
Sheridan 2021 ⁴ American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care	Medicare patients with metastatic lung, colorectal, breast and prostate cancers	Palliative care consultation within 7 days of death decreased healthcare costs by \$451, while palliative care consultation more than 4 weeks from death decreased costs by \$4,643.
Ernecoff 2021 ⁵ Journal of Palliative Medicine	Patients receiving palliative care services in an integrated delivery finance system	Palliative care was associated with significant cost saving and decreased length of stay when occurring early in a hospitalization and used for goals-of-care and hospice evaluation.
Gordon 2022 ⁶ Journal of Palliative Medicine	Adult home palliative care program	Adult home-based palliative care is effective in decreasing total medical costs by 16.7% during a calendar year compared with a control group. Savings were greater for patients enrolled for 6-12 months as compared to 1-5 months, and were most prominent for patients enrolled in commercial insurance products.

Conclusions of Meta-Analyses

Hughes 2014 ⁷ Annual Review Public Health	<i>“The benefits of palliative care have now been shown in multiple clinical trials, with increased patient and provider satisfaction, equal or better symptom control, more discernment of and honoring choices about place of death, fewer and less intensive hospital admissions in the last month of life, less anxiety and depression, less caregiver distress, and cost savings.”</i>
May 2018 ⁸ JAMA	<i>Hospital costs were lower for patients seen by a palliative care consultation team than for patients who did not receive this care. The estimated association was greater for those with a primary diagnosis of cancer and those with more comorbidities compared with those with a noncancer diagnosis and those with fewer comorbidities.</i>

References

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