

OP48.1

Vast majority of elderly people with multiple diseases can be treated at home, thanks to the mobile home visit team

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Background: 15–30% of elderly people with multiple diseases are re-hospitalised within 30 days of leaving hospital. The purpose of this study at SUS (Skåne University Healthcare) was to evaluate the effects of a mobile home-visit team, a collaboration between primary health care, inpatient care and the municipality.

Method: A team, consisting of nurse, occupational therapist and administrator from the municipality, and doctors from inpatient care or primary health care, started in 2013. Criteria were set up for home visits. The regular care provider, generally a nurse working in home care or at a care home, could call the team for an urgent home visit. The number of visits, their reason, taken measures, and follow-up were continuously registered. When the project came to an end, patients, relatives and care staff were interviewed.

Results: The project ran for 101 days. During this time, the team made 223 primary home visits and 50 return visits. The most common reasons for contacting the team were worsened general condition, breathing difficulties, swollen legs, pain, infections, falls and confusion. The most common measure taken was assessment and prescription of drugs/cessation of or changes to drugs prescribed. Home treatments included injections, infusions, inhalations, blood transfusions and dressings. In 93% of the cases, the visits could offer measures that did not include the patient being hospitalised or visiting the emergency room. When hospitalisation was necessary (7%), this was generally an immediate hospitalisation that did not go through the emergency room. 25% of the cases required increased assistance from the municipality. Both patients and their relatives were very satisfied with the emergency team's work.

Conclusion: An overwhelming majority of the elderly people with multiple diseases could be assessed and treated in their homes. Directly comparative studies, as well as health-financial evaluations, are needed.