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## Study Suggests That Hospitals Can Reduce Cost of ICU Patient Stays by Introducing Acute Palliative Care Units

A new study published in the American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Medicine suggests that one place hospitals might begin to reduce the cost of care is to move some patients from their intensive care units to Acute Palliative Care Units. These units are staffed by palliative medicine specialists and are being established in a handful of academic medical centers in the nation.

The study looked at the Acute Palliative Care Unit at New York City's Montefiore Medical Center where, for example, the median hospital charge for room and board in an APCU was less than half the cost of an ICU.

Other areas of cost savings were found as well, including:

-Ventilator costs were nearly five times as high in the ICU (\$10,399) vs. APCU (\$2,123) and 1/3 higher than in the Medical/Surgical unit (\$2,870).

-Pharmacy costs in the ICU were nearly five times as high (\$1,645) as in the APCU (\$156) and nearly twice as high in the Medical/Surgical unit (\$342).

APCUs allows patients to leave the ICU yet still receive a high level of medical care focusing on patients' values and treatment preferences, as well as support for their family members.

The 15-bed APCU was staffed by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a physician board certified in palliative medicine, as well as physician assistants, nurses, and social workers. The palliative care team assisted the patients transition from care whose sole focus is on aggressive disease-modifying therapy to one which places greater emphasis on the relief from pain and other symptoms. Study co-author Marlene McHugh, DNP, FNP, Assistant Professor of Clinical Nursing at Columbia University School of Nursing, who was on the Montefiore APCU team, is one of the first Nurse Practitioners in New York City to move palliative care into the acute care hospital setting and can discuss the results of the study and the benefits of acute palliative care units. To schedule an interview, please contact Rachel Zuckerman, [rz2274@columbia.edu](mailto:rz2274@columbia.edu) or [rz2274@columbia.edu](mailto:rz2274@columbia.edu).