

High Emergency Department Users: Older Adults with Diabetes and Health Care Use | Alberta

What is the Issue?

There are over 100,000 older adults living with diabetes in Alberta. The majority live with other health conditions and use a range of health care services. The most frequent users of the emergency department within this population represent a unique subgroup with particularly complex needs that are evident from their higher use of many other health care services.

Key Features of this Study:

Using health data from Alberta, two groups of community-living older adults with diabetes were identified:

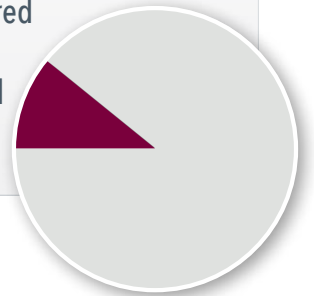
- 1) High-Emergency Department User Group:** All community-living older adults living with diabetes with the highest number of emergency department visits over one year.
- 2) Population-Based Group:** A random sample of community-living older adults living with diabetes.



Did you know?

11%

of those in the High-Emergency Department User Group died each year compared to 4% in the Population-Based Group.



We looked at how often people in the **High-Emergency Department User Group** and the **Population-Based Group** used different kinds of health care services within the previous year. Here is what we found:

| | High-Emergency Department User Group | Population-Based Group | High-Emergency Department User Group | Population-Based Group |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Doctor's Visits | 98% vs. 94% | 94% | FOR AN AVERAGE OF 12 vs. 8 VISITS PER YEAR | 8 |
| Specialist's Visit | 80% vs. 74% | 74% | FOR AN AVERAGE OF 7 vs. 6 VISITS PER YEAR | 6 |
| Emergency Department Visits | 74% vs. 34% | 34% | FOR AN AVERAGE OF 3 vs. 2 VISITS PER YEAR | 2 |
| Hospital Stays | 40% vs. 17% | 17% | SPENT AN AVERAGE OF 9 vs. 7 DAYS IN HOSPITAL IN THE YEAR | 7 |
| Homecare Use | 41% vs. 19% | 19% | WITH AN AVERAGE OF 15 vs. 12 VISITS PER MONTH | 12 |

Overall, we can see that older adults with diabetes use a considerable amount of health care. Both groups saw a family doctor with similar frequency over the year, but there were much bigger differences when we looked at any type of care.

Key Messages: Implications for Clinical Practice and Policy Considerations

- Older adults with diabetes are frequent health care users, and those identified in the High-Emergency Department User Group had more than twice the number of emergency department visits, hospital stays, and home care use.
- Strategies to ensure that older people with diabetes, especially those with frequent emergency department use, receive the right care at the right time and in the right setting need to be developed and implemented.

A comprehensive long-term strategy needs to be developed that focuses on all of these factors.

This infographic was developed on behalf of the ACHRU-CPP Research Team in collaboration with Lynne Mansell (patient/caregiver public partner) and Paige Blainey (ACHRU trainee). References available upon request. | achru.mcmaster.ca