Trajectories of life-space mobility after hospitalization.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Life space is a measure of where a person goes, the frequency of going there, and the dependency in getting there. It may be a more accurate measure of mobility in older adults because it reflects participation in society as well as physical ability.

OBJECTIVE: To assess effects of hospitalization on life space in older adults, and to compare life-space trajectories associated with surgical and nonsurgical hospitalizations.

DESIGN: Prospective observational study.

SETTING: Central Alabama.

PARTICIPANTS: 687 community-dwelling Medicare beneficiaries at least 65 years of age with surgical (n = 44), nonsurgical (n = 167), or no (n = 476) hospitalizations.

MEASUREMENTS: Life-Space Assessment (LSA) scores before and after hospitalization (range, 0 to 120; higher scores reflect greater mobility).

RESULTS: Mean age of participants was 74.6 years (SD, 6.3). Fifty percent were black, and 46% were male. Before hospitalization, adjusted LSA scores were similar in participants with surgical and nonsurgical admissions. Life-space assessment scores decreased in both groups immediately after hospitalization; however, participants with surgical hospitalizations had a greater decrease in scores (12.1 more points [95% CI, 3.6 to 20.7 points]; P = 0.005) than those with nonsurgical hospitalizations. However, participants with surgical hospitalizations...
recovered more rapidly over time (gain of 4.7 more points [CI, 2.0 to 7.4 points] per ln [week after discharge]; P < 0.001). Score recovery for participants with nonsurgical hospitalizations did not significantly differ from the null (average recovery, 0.7 points [CI, -0.6 to 1.9 points] per ln [week after discharge]).

**LIMITATION:** Life space immediately before and after hospitalization was self-reported, often after hospital discharge.

**CONCLUSION:** Hospitalization decreases life space in older adults. Surgical hospitalizations are associated with immediate marked life-space declines followed by rapid recovery, in contrast to nonsurgical hospitalizations, which are associated with more modest immediate declines and little evidence of recovery after several years of follow-up.

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