

Evaluating the Economic Impact of an Innovative Community-Based Volunteer Model

Background

- Community Care Corps (C3) is a groundbreaking initiative to provide volunteer-based nonmedical assistance to family caregivers, older adults, and adults with disabilities.
- The program aims to help older adults and adults with disabilities live independently in their own homes.
- The federal Administration for Community Living (ACL) funds the program; Oasis, Caregiver Action Network, and US Aging administer it; and Altarum evaluates its impact.
- C3 has funded 79 grants nationwide to start or enhance volunteer programs.

Research Objectives

- Oasis partnered with Altarum to examine the economic costs and benefits of providing nonmedical volunteer assistance to inform and support fundraising, congressional advocacy, and other efforts to sustain C3.
- We aim to create replicable analytic approaches that can be leveraged for other organizations nationwide.
- In this poster, we focus on a single grantee organization, Ascension Saint Agnes, and present preliminary findings on the economic impact of their volunteer medical appointment chaperoning program, focusing on the costs and benefits of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT).

Program Description

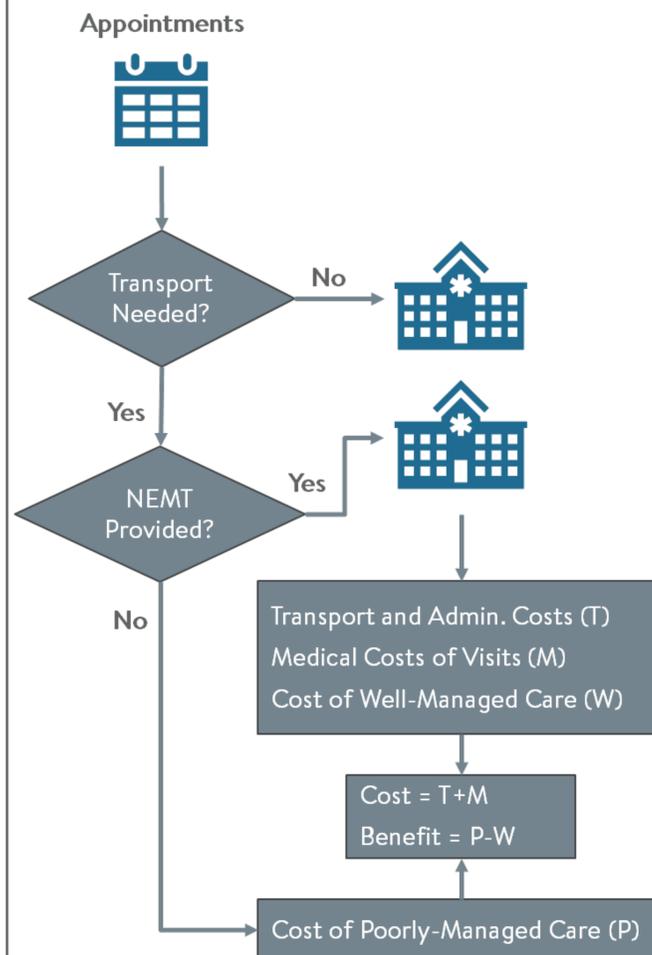
- With support from C3, Ascension Saint Agnes launched the Trusted Ride program to provide volunteer-chaperoned NEMT.
- The program is staffed by a team of trained volunteers who support patients in accessing Lyft ride-share services and accompany patients to and from their visits.
- This assistance is free to patients and is available for a range of medical appointments, including doctor visits, diagnostic tests, and outpatient procedures.

Methods

As in previous studies, we analyzed the economic costs and benefits of NEMT using a model developed by Altarum health economists and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in 2005. (NASEM, 2005; Rochlin et al., 2019). The model allowed us to estimate:

- The number of medical appointments program participants would have missed without chaperone assistance;
- The cost of transportation and medical appointments; and
- The economic benefits of well-managed care (as a result of NEMT) versus poorly managed care.

Economic Analysis Model Diagram



Results

We estimate that providing volunteer-chaperoned NEMT for Ascension Saint Agnes Patients yielded a cost-benefit ratio of 1.91, indicating a nearly two-to-one return on investment for the medical system.

Every \$1.00 spent on chaperoned transportation to medical appointments yields \$2.22 in additional medical costs but \$6.14 in cost savings to the medical system.

Ascension Saint Agnes Trusted Ride Program Cost-Benefit Analysis, 2021 to 2022 Grant Year

Program Data	
Patients Served	189
Medical Appointments	1,501
Cost Estimates	
Transportation Costs	\$48,023
Fixed Administrative Costs	\$57,600
Medical Costs for Providing Care	\$234,205
Total Costs	\$339,828
Benefit Estimates	
Cost of Poorly Managed Care	\$1,284,873
Cost of Well-Managed Care	\$635,896
Total Benefits	\$648,977
Net Benefits	\$309,149
Cost-Benefit Ratio	1.91

Conclusion

- Our analysis demonstrated that leveraging volunteer chaperones to ensure access to medical appointments can generate a substantial return on investment.
- While we could not determine which payers reap cost savings, Medicare and Medicaid are the most likely beneficiaries, given that patients are largely older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Our estimates were based on dated data and several informed assumptions, although more accurate and timely data are unlikely to reverse or substantially impact our findings.
- Estimated savings accrue after just one year and could grow at longer time scales. For example, the health benefits of well-managed care could help older adults and adults with disabilities live safely in the community, reducing or eliminating the need for costlier stays in hospitals and nursing homes over their lifetimes.
- These findings underline the positive impacts of C3 growing and supporting interventions like the Ascension Saint Agnes Trusted Ride program.



For more information on the Community Care Corps program, including how to apply for funding, visit communitycarecorps.org.

References:

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2005). *Cost-Benefit Analysis of Providing Non-Emergency Medical Transportation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/22055>

Rochlin, D.H., Lee, C.M., Scheuter, C., Milstein, A., & Kaplan, R. M. (2019). Economic Benefit of "Modern" Nonemergency Medical Transportation That Utilizes Digital Transportation Networks. *American Journal of Public Health*, 109(3), 472-474. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304857>.

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