

# Length of stay and readmissions as an effective indicator of healthcare performance. A systematic review.

## Authors

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## The challenge

Appraisal of hospital performance is important and may provide valuable insights to assess quality and drive service improvement. There are several indicators that are frequently used to measure quality of hospital care. Two of the most important indicators include Length of Stay (LOS) and readmission to hospital (usually within 30 days of discharge). This systematic literature review allows us to determine whether LOS and readmission serve as effective indicator of healthcare performance.

## What we did

According to PRISMA guidelines we conducted a systematic search of the literature using 6 databases, and citation searching. This resulted in 20 research articles that met the inclusion criteria and were used in this review.

## What we found

- LOS is a commonly used indicator and is essential to hospital planning. Shorter LOS can have economic and health benefits, whereas inefficiency related to LOS can lead to reduced accessibility, overcrowding of emergency departments and delayed access to medical treatments.
- Hospital readmissions (particularly within 30 days of discharge) is also an important indicator and is something to be avoided. However, not all readmissions reflect poor hospital performance.
- LOS and readmissions are closely related and examining a single measure is unlikely to provide a full indication of hospital performance

## What does this mean for health practitioners?

LOS and hospital readmissions are commonly used to appraise health service performance. They are promising as quality indicators, however care needs to be taken in interpreting these and they should be considered together when using these to measure hospital performance.

### Reference

de Vent, K., Porter, J. E., Larkins, J., & Peck, B. (2024). Length of stay and readmissions as an effective indicator of healthcare performance: A systematic review. *Medical Care Research and Review*. Under Review.

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### The DELIVER Research Project:

- Identifies what the people and healthcare providers of western Victoria need most in terms of home-based healthcare services
  - Designs and tests the best way to deliver these services, so that home-based healthcare services will continue to grow and improve across the region and beyond
  - Supports the growth of research in western Victoria, so that future research findings can quickly be translated to improvements in healthcare
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