

## NEWS

## Most emergency attendances at hospital are appropriate, finds study

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Only one in seven people attending hospital emergency departments in England could have been seen by a GP in the community, research carried out by the College of Emergency Medicine has found.

The college said that the finding challenges the much quoted figure that 40% of patients who go to emergency departments are discharged requiring no treatment.

The research was based on analysis of the records of 3053 patients who visited 12 emergency departments across England over a 24 hour period on Thursday 20 March 2014. The emergency departments were representative in terms of geography, age, and case mix.

The study found that 15% of those attending hospital emergency departments could be seen by a GP in the community without the need for emergency department assessment. This would equate to 2.1 million patients a year. Of these, the largest subgroup was young children with symptoms of minor illness.

The study found that 22% of people could be appropriately managed by a GP working in the emergency department with

access to the same resources. A further 63% of those attending the emergency department needed the skills of an emergency medicine doctor, and 28% were admitted to hospital. The group for whom redirection was least likely was elderly people.

The college is calling for the establishment of primary care centres located alongside hospital emergency departments to ease congestion. It also wants GPs to work within the emergency department and to use its facilities.

Clifford Mann, the college's president, said, "The fact that only 15% of attendees at emergency departments could be safely redirected to a primary care clinician without the need for emergency department assessment is a statistic that must be heeded by those who wish to reconfigure services.

"Providing a more appropriate resource for the 2.1 million patients represented by this figure would substantially decongest emergency departments."

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## Figure

