

New Study Finds that ASCs Save Money, Increase Efficiency While Maintaining Quality



NEWS



ALEXANDRIA, VA, May 7, 2014 — A study published this week in *Health Affairs* finds that ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) save money and increase efficiency for Medicare, insurers and patients alike, while providing the same high quality care as hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs). The study, conducted by health economists Elizabeth Munnich of the University of Louisville and Stephen Parente of the University of Minnesota, concludes that “ASCs are a high-quality, lower-cost substitute for hospitals as venues for outpatient surgery.”

Speaking Wednesday at a briefing at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, Professor Munnich said that ASCs provide a cost efficient surgical environment in which “surgeons can perform more cases [and] staff can perform more cases.” “Ultimately,” she continued, “the implication is that insurers—whether public or private—would generate savings which would theoretically be passed onto patients.”

Analyzing data from more than 50,000 surgical procedures over four years, the authors find that ASCs not only save money and increase efficiency, but also “provide high quality care, even for the most vulnerable patients.” The authors warn, however, that “recent [Medicare] reimbursement changes have lowered payments to ASCs, which reduces the incentives to start or expand these facilities.”

“Professors Munnich and Parente are only the latest experts to conclude that ambulatory surgery centers save billions while maintaining high-quality surgical care,” said William Prentice, Chief Executive Officer of the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association. “Their findings also show that ASCs could save billions more than they do currently if policymakers were to take steps to ensure that patients have improved access to the services ASCs provide.”

Last month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) [found](#) that outpatient surgical procedures performed in ASCs have saved Medicare more than \$1 billion in each of the last several years. Late last year, researchers at the University of California-Berkeley [projected](#) that ASCs have the potential to save Medicare and its beneficiaries up to \$57.6 billion over the next decade.

The full study “Procedures Take Less Time At Ambulatory Surgery Centers, Keeping Costs Down And Ability To Meet Demand Up” can be read in the May issue of *Health Affairs*. The full HHS OIG report can be read [here](#), and the results of the University of California–Berkeley research are available [here](#).

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About ASCs: ASCs are an integral part of the health care system, providing critical access to surgical and diagnostic care, including preventive services. As essential Medicare providers of surgical and cancer screening services, ASCs perform more than 40 percent of Medicare colonoscopies. Learn more about this critical life-saving procedure [here](#).

About the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association (ASCA): ASCA is working to raise awareness of the important role that ASCs play in the US health care system and the high-quality, cost-effective care that ASCs provide. For more about ASCA, go to ascassociation.org.