



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

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### **Intensive care study seeks to cut number of ward readmissions**

Patients who require treatment in intensive care units could be helped by new research that seeks to reduce hospital readmission rates.

A team led by the University of Edinburgh is looking at why many critically ill patients return urgently to hospital after being sent home.

Researchers say that the study will provide insights that will help prevent readmissions and improve care for patients following discharge from Intensive Care Units.

The Edinburgh team will spend the next two years assessing which patients are at greatest risk of hospital readmission, why it occurs, and the dangers that could be avoided through early intervention.

They also hope to develop toolkits to improve patient care across the UK. These will aim to provide simple screening tools to identify patients at greatest risk of readmission.

Researchers will also suggest interventions to support patients and their families in the early period after hospital discharge.

The work builds on previous research by the University of Edinburgh that found that, on average, patients who are discharged from intensive care use more than £6400 in acute hospital resource in the year following their illness.

This represents more than £33 million every year in Scotland and £400 million across the UK.

The study also showed that one in four people who had an episode of critical illness needed intensive care treatment were readmitted to hospital urgently within 90 days of going home.

Some 13 per cent of the same group were readmitted within one month of discharge.

Experts suggest that the figures may indicate a systematic failure in current provision of support, which, needs to be fully understood and addressed.

They also add that tracking rates of readmission to hospital could help drive and monitor quality improvement. Similar targets have been used after common surgical procedures, but have not previously been used following intensive care.

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Every year in excess of 100,000 patients are admitted to more than 250 intensive care units in the UK.

While 70 to 80 per cent of patients survive their illness and return home, the burden of recovery – which can prevent patients returning to normal life – is extremely high, say experts.

Professor Tim Walsh, Professor of Critical Care at the University of Edinburgh's Medical Research Council Centre for Inflammation Research and Consultant Intensivist at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, said: "The human cost of surviving ICU is significant. Those surviving a critical illness experience many problems over months or even years. These include muscle weakness, fatigue, impaired mobility, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic symptoms."

The study is funded by the Chief Scientist Office.

For further information, please contact: Eleanor Cowie, Press and PR Office, tel +44 131 650 6382/0131 242 9485; [Eleanor.Cowie@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Eleanor.Cowie@ed.ac.uk)