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# Predictors of high hospital admission and criminal reoffending in adults experiencing homelessness: a retrospective cohort study

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## Objectives

To examine the costs and predictors of high hospital use and criminal reoffending in adults experiencing homelessness.

## Approach

Retrospective cohort study of 2,140 adults who attended homeless hostel clinics in New South Wales, Australia using linked clinic, health, criminal offence, and mortality data from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2021. Multivariable logistic regression examined predictors of high all-cause hospital use ($\geq 4$ emergency department presentations in 12 months) and predictors of recidivism.

## Results

There were 27,466 hospitalisations at a total cost of AUD$548.2 million. Twenty-seven percent of the cohort had high hospital use. Factors associated with high use were age $\geq 45$ years, female (AOR: 1.52; 95%CI 1.05-2.22), presence of a mental disorder, substance use disorder (AOR: 1.36; 95%CI: 1.03-1.82), or being homeless for >1 year (AOR: 1.31; 95%CI: 1.06-1.62). There were 1,646 (76.9%) adults who had contact with the criminal justice system. Most (75.3%) reoffended within 24 months after index offence, and reoffenders were more likely to be younger, have a personality disorder (AOR: 1.31; 95% CI: 1.04-1.67), substance use disorder (AOR: 1.60; 95%CI 1.14-2.23), and had a previous charge dismissed on mental health grounds (AOR: 1.79; 95% CI: 1.31-2.46). Reoffenders more likely to have a principal theft-related offence (AOR: 1.85; 95%CI: 1.29-2.66). Total court finalisation costs were AUD$11.3 million.

## Conclusions and implications

The high use of hospital and criminal justice services lends support to strategies to develop models of supported housing with a focus on integrated care, mental health support, improved referral pathways, and better coordination with community-based support agencies.

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