



STATISTICAL BRIEF

August 2011

Hospitalizations in which Patients Leave the Hospital against Medical Advice (AMA), 2009

Patients who leave the hospital against medical advice (AMA) may be at increased risk for adverse health outcomes. In 2009, there were 20,731 hospitalizations in which patients left AMA, comprising about one percent of all hospital stays in Texas (excluding discharges for newborns and maternal childbirth). The aggregate hospital charges for AMA stays totaled about \$508 million.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of hospital stays in which patients left the hospital AMA compared to all other stays. Relative to all other hospital stays, AMA stays, on average, were 3.1 days shorter (3.0 versus 6.1 days) and about half as expensive (\$24,495 versus \$48,447 per stay), but there was no significant difference in daily charges (about \$8,000 per day). The average age of the two groups differed by ten years (46 years for the AMA patients compared to 56 years for all other patients), and the pattern of stays by age group was different. Hospital stays ending AMA occurred most frequently among patients 45-64 years old (1.4 hospitalizations per 1,000 population); all other hospital stays occurred most frequently among individuals 65 years and older (338.2 hospitalizations per 1,000 population). For either AMA or non-AMA case, hospital stays occurred least frequently among children (1-17 years old).

Table 2 highlights the five most frequent health conditions for which patients leaving the hospital AMA were hospitalized. Two of the top five reasons for AMA hospital stays were mental health and substance abuse-related (mood and alcohol-related disorders). These two conditions collectively accounted for 14.6 percent of AMA stays (3,032 stays), while representing 5.1 percent of stays for all other hospitalizations. Patients hospitalized for mood disorders were 2.5 times more likely to leave the hospital AMA; while, those hospitalized for alcohol-related disorders were 6 times more likely to leave AMA. Diabetes with complications and nonspecific chest pain ranked second and third for AMA patients—each accounting for about 4 percent of stays, and were 2.1 and 2.6 times more common in AMA stays than other hospital stays, respectively. Patients for congestive heart failure were equally likely to be hospitalized between AMA stays (3.3 percent) and non-AMA stays (3.1 percent).

Government payers, Medicare and Medicaid, were billed for 49.4 percent of AMA stays, which was slightly smaller than the percentage (55.8 percent) of all other hospital stays (Figure 1). Relative to their shares of all other hospital stays, uninsured hospitalizations accounted for more

stays for AMA patients (27.1 percent of AMA stays compared to 10.1 percent of non-AMA stays), while private insurers were billed with less frequency when patients left the hospital AMA (20.6 percent of AMA stays compared to 31.6 percent of non-AMA stays).

Table 1. Characteristics of hospital stays for patients who left the hospital against medical advice (AMA) compared to all other stays, 2009*

	AMA hospital stays	All other hospital stays
Number of hospital stays (percent of all stays)	20,731 (1.0%)	2,107,974 (99.0%)
Mean length of stay (in days)	3.0	6.1
Mean charge per stay	\$24,495	\$48,447
Mean charge per day	\$8,089	\$7,938
Aggregate charges (in millions)	\$508	\$102,124
Mean age (in years)	46.3	55.9
<i>Age (rate per 1,000 population)</i>		
1-17 years	0.1	25.7
18-44 years	0.9	41.4
45-64 years	1.4	113.0
65+ years	1.3	338.2

* Hospital stays for newborns and maternal childbirth have been excluded.

Note: Age data are not presented for the less than 1 age group as this group is largely comprised of newborns.

Source: Texas Hospital Inpatient Discharge Public Use Data File (PUDF), 2009.

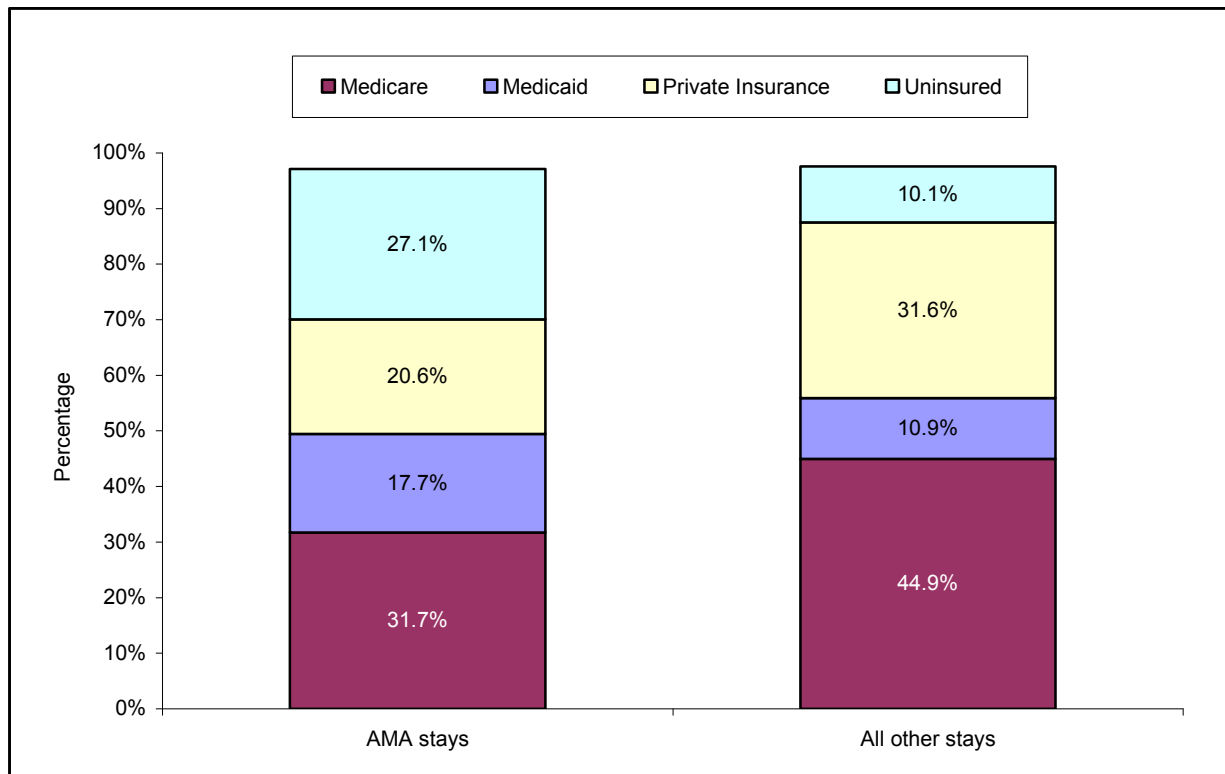
Table 2. Top 5 principal diagnoses among patients who left the hospital against medical advice (AMA), 2009*

Rank (AMA patients)	Principal diagnosis, CCS category	Number (percent) of AMA stays	Number (percent) of non-AMA stays	Relative rate of stays with AMA versus non-AMA discharge
1	Mood disorders	2,302 (11.1%)	95,018 (4.5%)	2.5
2	Diabetes with complications	839 (4.0%)	40,364 (1.9%)	2.1
3	Nonspecific chest pain	812 (3.9%)	31,861 (1.5%)	2.6
4	Alcohol-related disorders	730 (3.5%)	12,309 (0.6%)	6.0
5	Congestive heart failure, nonhypertensive	674 (3.3%)	64,539 (3.1%)	1.1

* Hospital stays for newborns and maternal childbirth have been excluded.

Source: Texas Hospital Inpatient Discharge Public Use Data File (PUDF), 2009.

Figure 1. Distribution of hospital stays in which patients left the hospital AMA compared to all other stays, by payer, 2009*



* Hospital stays for newborns and maternal childbirth have been excluded.

Note: A small portion of stays, less than 3 percent, were covered by other insurance programs and are not included.

Source: Texas Hospital Inpatient Discharge Public Use Data File (PUDF), 2009.