

Optimising Outpatient Follow-Up to Reduce 30-day Hospital Readmissions

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Reducing 30-day hospital readmissions is **a key policy priority** under Singapore's **Healthier SG strategy**. While outpatient follow-up after discharge is widely recommended, universal follow-up is often impractical and resource intensive. The key question is – **who benefits most from outpatient follow-up?**

We conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 83 studies (76 included in meta-analysis),¹ we aimed to determine **for whom** and **when** outpatient follow-up is most effective in reducing 30-day hospital readmissions. The following table summarizes the key findings based on good quality studies:

Timing of follow-up	Population	Effect on 30-Day Readmissions
Within 30 days	Adults ≥65 years with: - Heart Failure - Acute Myocardial Infarction - 'Other diseases'	↓ 35% ↓ 44% ↓ 27%
	Adults <65 years with 'Other diseases'	No significant reduction
Within 14 days	Adults ≥65 years with: - Heart Failure - Acute - Myocardial Infarction - 'Other diseases'	↓ 37% ↓ 43% No significant reduction
	Adults <65 years with 'Other diseases'	No significant reduction

'Other diseases': diseases other than Heart failure and Acute Myocardial Infarction

Policy Implications:

- **Prioritize outpatient follow-up within 14 days of discharge for older adults with Heart failure and Acute Myocardial Infarction** to maximize reductions in readmissions.
- For **all other older adults**, outpatient follow-up **within 30 days** of discharge is recommended.
- **Routine early follow-up for younger adults with non-Heart failure/ Acute Myocardial Infarction conditions** may have limited impact on readmissions and should be scheduled based on individual risk profile.

Recommended Actions- Move from Universal to Targeted Follow-Up

- Implement structured discharge planning targeting high-risk older adults.
- Strengthen outpatient capacity to enable timely follow-up appointments.
- Monitor readmission trends

Findings are supported by a Singapore-based study.²

References:

1. Balasubramanian I, Andres EB, Malhotra C. Outpatient Follow-Up and 30-Day Readmissions: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. JAMA Netw Open. 2025;8(11):e2541272.
2. Balasubramanian I, Malhotra C; SCOPAH study group. Can Timely Outpatient Visits Reduce Readmissions and Mortality Among Heart Failure Patients? J Gen Intern Med. 2024 Oct;39(13):2478-2486.