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A thirty-year retrospective study of hospitalization among severely mentally ill patients.

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Abstract: This study examines the effects of deinstitutionalization policies on psychiatric hospitalization rates over a thirty-year period. It is based on a retrospective study of successive hospitalizations in severely disabled patients. The data indicate that in any five-year period these patients still spend over 20% of their time in hospital. For patients who have stayed for a total of more than one year every five years in hospital, the average length of stay has been decreasing far less rapidly in the last fifteen years than it had previously. Patients who were first admitted after 1971 spent proportionally as much time in hospital as those whose first stay was earlier. These results show that the groups primarily affected by deinstitutionalization are those who were first hospitalized prior to the 1970s and those who are the heaviest hospital users. However, the data from the patients admitted since the seventies seem to reveal that the process of change may have reached its limits.

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