

## **Clozapine Use Leads to More Rehospitalization in Veterans With Schizophrenia**

Clozapine, the first of a new generation of atypical antipsychotic medications, represented a breakthrough treatment when introduced in the late 1980's for patients with schizophrenia who responded poorly to conventional agents. Some of the most intractable cases have been shown to improve with clozapine and risk of troubling neurological side effects is low. The cost of clozapine treatment is 3-11 times higher than typical antipsychotic medicines but its impact on severe cases is believed to offset the added cost by reducing rehospitalization. VISN 1 MIRECC investigators found just the opposite in a study of clozapine use in over 4,000 real-world patients in the VA system. Compared with matched control patients with schizophrenia receiving conventional medications, clozapine patients required 36% more high cost inpatient treatment after discharge from an initial hospital stay. This finding contrasts with clinical wisdom and several prior studies of clozapine use. Most of the excess costs were incurred by patients who dropped out of clozapine treatment before 1 year, a group that was not included in previous research. Cost savings from clozapine are most likely in patients with very high hospital usage before starting this new medicine. The study's authors include Michael Sernyak, M.D., Robert Rosenheck, M.D., Rani Desai, Ph.D., Marilyn Stolar, M.S. and Gary Ripper, M.A.