



Highlights of [GAO-04-913](#), a report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

VA LONG-TERM CARE

More Accurate Measure of Home-Based Primary Care Workload Is Needed

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a variety of long-term care services that includes nursing home care and noninstitutional care provided in community-based settings or in the homes of veterans. One important noninstitutional service is home-based primary care, which uses a multidisciplinary team approach involving VA health care providers and others such as social workers to treat veterans who are homebound. As part of GAO's work for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, to assess how VA meets veterans' long-term care needs, GAO reviewed how VA measures workload for home-based primary care and five other noninstitutional services.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that VA measure and report the amount of home-based primary care services veterans receive by using visits. VA agreed that a more accurate measure of home-based primary care is needed but did not concur with GAO's recommendation. However, VA plans to establish a combination of workload measures for home-based primary care and other long-term care programs in fiscal year 2005, including visits, which will be responsive to GAO's recommendation.

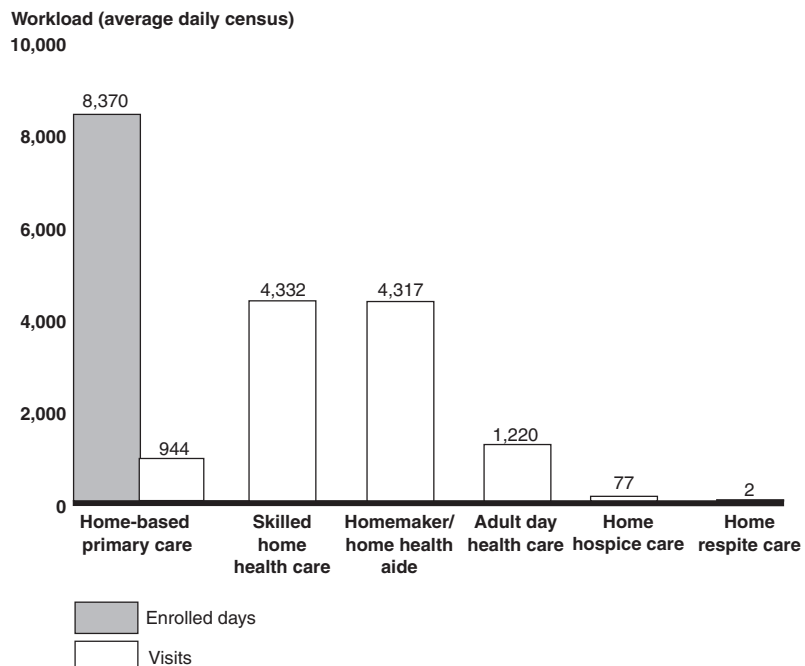
www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-913.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cynthia A. Bascetta at (202) 512-7101.

What GAO Found

The amount of home-based primary care veterans receive is not accurately reflected in VA's workload measurement for that service. VA measures home-based primary care workload using the number of days a veteran is enrolled in the program rather than the number of visits the veteran received. For example, if a veteran was enrolled in VA's home-based primary care program for 1 week, and received two visits from VA providers that week, VA would calculate the workload using 7 days, rather than two visits. As a result, using enrolled days as the workload unit of measure overstates the amount of home-based primary care actually received by veterans. In fiscal year 2003, VA reported an average daily workload for home-based primary care of 8,370 using enrolled days; in contrast, GAO determined that using the number of visits results in a workload of 944. In addition, VA's measurement of home-based primary care using enrolled days is inconsistent with the way it measures workload for the other noninstitutional long-term care services GAO reviewed. VA measures workload for these other services using the number of visits a veteran received. As a result, VA's workload total for home-based primary care overstates that service's use compared to other noninstitutional services VA provides.

VA Noninstitutional Long-Term Care Workload, Fiscal Year 2003



Source: VA data and GAO analysis of VA data.

Note: VA reports all noninstitutional care workload measures except home-based primary care in visits.