

Steve Lurie's letter to the Globe & Mail, January 17, 2012, in response to ["Premiers don't need slush fund to innovate in health care"](#)

While health care transfers are increasing by 6%, provinces have the opportunity to build on the investments they have been making to shift the health care system towards prevention and chronic disease management, which will reduce demand for costly hospital based services.

Studies show that case management and community treatment teams for people living with serious mental illness reduce costly hospitalizations by over 50%. Supportive housing costs far less than shelters and hospitals, and according to a recent study done for the Mental Health Commission, there are 520,000 people living with mental illness in Canada who are homeless or vulnerably housed. A rent supplement of \$6000 per year is much less than the \$700 per day cost of hospitalization. Calgary has been able to close homeless shelter beds because of investments in supportive housing.

Paradoxically the investments in community mental health services proposed by Senator Michael Kirby five years ago would add only 0.29% to annual health spending, but would improve access and quality of care, while making the health system more efficient.

Steve Lurie