June 24, 2016

So Maybe It's Not True

Many say the last six months of life are the most expensive. But a new study challenges that assumption. Researchers, who said this issue had not been fully examined, found Medicare recipients who died spent in four unique ways. Nearly half had “high persistent spending.” Almost a third had “moderate persistent spending.” Ten percent had “progressive spending” and only 12 percent had “late rise spending.”

High spending for the last year came from with people with multiple chronic conditions. The study showed “spending at the end of life is a marker of general spending patterns often set in motion long before death.” In short, policymakers should not target the last months of life for cost control.

“Identification of Four Unique Spending Patterns Among Older Adults In The Last Year of Life Challenges Standard Assumptions,” Matthew Allen Davis, et al., Health Affairs, June 2016.