Esmin Green fell out of her chair in the waiting room of Brooklyn's largest psychiatric hospital nearly an hour before anyone realized she was in trouble. For 20 minutes, she writhed and twisted between two chairs under the watchful eye of a security camera whose footage would later be broadcast across the country, spurring a public outcry. Two security guards and two other staff members passed through the room and glanced at the 49-year-old woman, without bothering to check her vital signs or help her up. Nearly 40 minutes after she stopped moving, a nurse walked over and lightly kicked her. By then, she was already dead. The city's medical examiner cited blood clots in her legs as the official cause.

As disturbing as the circumstances of [Esmin Green](http://www.newsweek.com/related.aspx?subject=Esmin+Green" \t "_blank)'s death were, they should not have come as a surprise. Public hospitals across the country have struggled to provide acute psychiatric care to the poor and uninsured since the early 1960s, when large mental hospitals began closing their doors en masse. Rather than lock them away in cold, uncaring institutions, the thinking went, the mentally ill should be offered a place in society. But with insufficient outpatient services and a dearth of community-based support, the least fortunate of them have ended up in already overtaxed emergency rooms. They are the poor, the uninsured and the undocumented. Many of them suffer from chronic conditions that could potentially be treated with medication and regular counseling, luxuries most of them cannot afford.

With just 50,000 inpatient psychiatric beds for tens of millions of people across the country, the mentally ill typically wait twice as long for treatment as other patient populations do. "It's like landing airplanes at JFK airport," says Ken Duckworth, medical director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. "There is just no place for them to go."

*Adapted from article “The Woman Who Died in the Waiting Room” by Jeneen Interlandi,* Newsweek, *July 12, 2008*

**Writing Directions**

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.