

Cardiac-related calls to EMS down, OHCA up during COVID-19

June 1 2021



(HealthDay)—During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a decrease in

cardiac-related calls to emergency medical services (EMS) and a corresponding increase in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, according to a report published online May 26 in *Health Affairs*.

Christopher Sun, Ph.D., from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, and colleagues used EMS call data to describe the correlation between patients' reluctance to call EMS for cardiac-related care and excess [out-of-hospital](#) cardiac arrest incidence and related outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes were examined during the initial COVID-19 wave (March 15 to June 8, 2020) and two months after the initial wave ended (June 9 to Aug. 31, 2020).

The researchers found that compared with historical baselines, there was a decrease in cardiac-related EMS calls during the initial COVID-19 wave (−27.2 percent), while increases were seen in calls with hospital transportation refusal and out-of-hospital cardiac arrest incidence (+32.5 and +35.5 percent, respectively). After the initial wave, despite fewer COVID-19 infections and relaxed public health advisories, cardiac-related calls remained lower (−17.2 percent) and out-of-hospital cardiac arrest incidence remained elevated (+24.8 percent). Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest incidence was significantly associated with a reduction in cardiac-related calls, but not with infection rates of COVID-19 throughout Boston's 14 neighborhoods.

"The sustained changes in patients' care-seeking behaviors and excess out-of-hospital cardiac arrest deaths after the initial COVID-19 wave may foreshadow the harmful long-term indirect effects of COVID-19 on health care systems," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

Citation: Cardiac-related calls to EMS down, OHCA up during COVID-19 (2021, June 1)
retrieved 3 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-cardiac-related-ems-ohca-covid-.html>

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