

Use of emergency departments plummets during COVID-19

10 June 2020, by Kylie Urban



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In a [new commentary piece](#), published in *JAMA Health Forum*, two health researchers describe the decrease in emergency department use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While data are still being collected and reviewed, we know there was a dramatic drop in patients seeking care in emergency departments during March and April 2020," says Keith Kocher, M.D., MPH, an associate professor of emergency medicine and learning [health sciences](#) at Michigan Medicine and a member of the University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation.

Kocher, along with Michelle Macy, M.D., M.S., of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, highlight in the commentary major reasons for the decline and their implications, including [emergency department](#) demand being related to patients' physical and [social environments](#).

"Social distancing, frequent hand washing and wearing masks in public, all help lower the

transmission of viruses and infectious illnesses, which are often reasons why patients, especially children, seek [emergency care](#)," Macy says.

In addition, Kocher and Macy say the epidemiology of injuries changed during the pandemic, such as fewer [motor vehicle accidents](#) occurring due to less travel, and health care administration and policy decisions affected patients' ability to obtain care. For example, cancellations of scheduled procedures and expansion of telehealth appointments kept patients from physically going to a hospital for care.

They also note that the pandemic altered when and how quickly patients turn to the emergency department for urgent care needs.

"This is truly tragic because if someone is experiencing concerning symptoms, we want them to come in as quickly as possible for care," Kocher says. "Our emergency department is safe and ready to care for you."

More information: Emergency Department Patients in the Early Months of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic—What Have We Learned? jamanetwork.com/channels/health-care/fullarticle/2767238

Provided by University of Michigan

APA citation: Use of emergency departments plummets during COVID-19 (2020, June 10) retrieved 2 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-emergency-departments-plummets-covid-.html>

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