

WHO predicts COVID-19 will take heavy toll in Africa

May 21 2020



(HealthDay)—Without quick action, the new coronavirus could sicken

up to a quarter-billion people in Africa during the pandemic's first year and claim 190,000 lives, a new modeling forecast suggests.

Up to 5.5 million people could require hospitalization, 140,000 could have severe COVID-19, and 89,000 would be critically ill, the World Health Organization study says.

The forecast—led by author Humphrey Karamagi, from WHO's office in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo—has been accepted for publication in the journal *BMJ Global Health*.

The study predicts lower exposure rates and a slower spread of the new [coronavirus](#) in Africa than in other parts of the world. It also forecasts fewer severe COVID-19 cases and deaths than in other regions, including the United States and Europe.

However, related increases in [hospital care](#) would divert already scarce resources for major health problems in Africa—such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and malnutrition—which would worsen the impact of the new coronavirus, the study warns.

Researchers also noted that limited testing and diagnostic services and poor monitoring and data collection systems, particularly in [rural areas](#), would make it even harder for African health services to respond effectively.

Compared to other countries, the coronavirus could linger longer in Africa, possibly for several years, Karamagi and his colleagues said.

"These system capacity challenges highlight the need to ensure the success of the containment measures to avoid the need for mitigation measures that, despite relatively fewer cases expected in the region, will be difficult to institute," they said in a journal news release.

The success of containment measures such as contact tracing, isolation, hand-washing and physical distancing is critical, they added.

The researchers called on the 47 countries of WHO's African region to expand hospital capacity to address the threat.

More information: The World Health Organization has more on [COVID-19](#).

Copyright © 2020 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: WHO predicts COVID-19 will take heavy toll in Africa (2020, May 21) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-covid-heavy-toll-africa.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.