

Death rates among people with severe COVID-19 drop by a half in England

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Death rates from people with severe COVID-19 in hospital have dropped to around a half of the rate at the peak of the pandemic, new research has revealed.

An analysis of over 21,000 [hospital](#) admissions, published in *Critical Care Medicine*, found a significant drop in death rates for both high

dependency unit admissions and [intensive care](#) admissions between March and the end of June.

The team was led by the University of Exeter and involved the University of Warwick, and was supported by The Alan Turing Institute. They found death rates were highest in late March, at 26 per cent among people admitted to high dependency units, and 41 per cent among people admitted to intensive care. For June admissions, death rates had dropped to 7 per cent among high dependency unit admissions, and to 21 per cent among intensive care admissions.

Dr. John Dennis, of the University of Exeter Medical School, who led the research, said: "Importantly, we controlled for factors including age, sex, ethnicity and other health conditions such as diabetes. This suggests the improvement in [death](#) rates in more recent months is not simply due to younger, or previously healthier, people being admitted to critical care. A number of factors are likely to be at play here, including improved understanding of how to manage COVID-19 amongst doctors, and the introduction of effective treatments."

The team accessed national data from adults admitted to critical care via the COVID-19 Hospitalisation in England Surveillance System (CHESS), collected by Public Health England. They looks at how the proportion of people with COVID-19 dying within 30 days of [admission](#) changed over March until the end of June.

Dr. Bilal Mateen, of the University of Warwick, said: "The reduction in the number of people dying from COVID-19 in hospitals is clearly a step in the right direction, but it's important that we do not become complacent as a result. It's possible that the higher [death rates](#) at the peak of the pandemic are in part because hospitals were so overcrowded at that point. Even at the lowest point, nearly a quarter of admissions to intensive care were still dying- that's a huge number of people, and we

have to do all we can to control the spread of the virus and keep [hospital admissions](#) as low as possible."

More information: John M. Dennis et al, Improving Survival of Critical Care Patients With Coronavirus Disease 2019 in England, *Critical Care Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1097/CCM.0000000000004747](https://doi.org/10.1097/CCM.0000000000004747)

Provided by University of Exeter

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