

Social isolation during COVID-19 pandemic linked with high blood pressure

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Lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with an increase in high blood pressure among patients admitted to emergency. That's the finding of a study presented at the 46th Argentine Congress of

Cardiology (SAC).

"Admission to the emergency department during the mandatory [social isolation](#) period was linked with a 37% increase in the odds of having [high blood pressure](#)—even after taking into account age, gender, month, day and time of consultation, and whether or not the patient arrived by ambulance," said study author Dr. Matías Fosco of Favaloro Foundation University Hospital, Buenos Aires.

Mandatory social [isolation](#) due to COVID-19 was implemented on 20 March in Argentina as a part of a general lockdown. People were told to stay at home, except for essential workers (e.g. doctors and nurses). The [general public](#) were permitted to leave home only to buy food, medicine and cleaning supplies. Schools and universities were closed, and public events were suspended.

"After social isolation began, we observed that more patients coming to emergency had high [blood pressure](#)," said Dr. Fosco. "We conducted this study to confirm or reject this impression."

The study was conducted in the emergency department of Favaloro Foundation University Hospital. The frequency of high blood pressure among patients aged 21 and above during the three-month social isolation (20 March to 25 June 2020) was compared to two previous time periods: the same three months in 2019 (21 March to 27 June 2019) and the three months immediately before social isolation (13 December 2019 to 19 March 2020).

Blood pressure is a standard measurement on admission to the emergency department and almost every patient (98.2%) admitted between 21 March 2019 and 25 June 2020 was included in the study. The most common reasons for admission were [chest pain](#), shortness of breath, dizziness, [abdominal pain](#), fever, cough, and hypertension.

The study included 12,241 patients. The average age was 57 years and 45.6% were women. During the three-month isolation period 1,643 patients were admitted to the [emergency department](#). This was 56.9% less than during the same three months in 2019 (3,810 patients) and 53.9% lower than during the three months immediately before social isolation (3,563 patients).

During the social isolation period, 391 (23.8%) patients admitted to emergency had high blood pressure. This proportion was significantly higher compared to the same period in 2019, when it was 17.5%, and compared to the three months before social isolation, when it was 15.4% (p

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