

Beyond the illness: how COVID-19 is negatively impacting those who are not infected

December 16 2020

The pandemic has impacted farmers, children, plant workers and even office workers in unique ways that go beyond physical illness. Several studies that explore these individualized effects will be presented during the Individual Impacts of Global Pandemic Risks session and the COVID-19: Risk Communication and Social Dynamics of Transmission and Vulnerability symposia, both on December 15, at the 2020 Society for Risk Analysis virtual Annual Meeting, December 13-17, 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected workers in our nation's meat-packing plants disproportionately, especially in the early months. In April 2020, meatpacking facilities were deemed an essential business and forced to remain open, but many meatpacking workers have fallen ill from COVID-19 as a result of hours spent in high-risk facilities, leading to plant closures that have caused economic problems for livestock producers, meat processors, grocery stores, and consumers.

Felicia Wu, Ph.D., Michigan State University, is modeling SARS-CoV-2 infection risk among meatpacking workers in U.S. beef, pork and poultry processing facilities to assist policymakers with crafting public health solutions, including improved risk communication, to make meatpacking facilities safer and to ensure a stable meat supply. Her presentation, "Meatpacking workers: Communicating risks of public health and economics," will describe an infection risk model based on viral doses and describe model results for various interventions that

could cost-effectively reduce COVID-19 risk among workers.

COVID-19 has acutely impacted the agriculture industry and many farmers have been forced to make drastic changes to their business proceedings and their daily lives. Margaret Beetstra, MPA, Ohio State University, evaluated farmer experiences during the pandemic to determine what they are doing to mitigate their risk, how their short- and long-term goals have changed, and the extent to which they feel in control at this time.

Her presentation, "Considering the impact of COVID-19 on farmers," revealed that livestock farmers have experienced major disruptions in the supply chain that have led to issues selling animals and forced them to euthanize some animals. Farmers were also forced to think short-term and their financial concerns influenced much of their decision-making. This limited innovation and experimentation in new farming methods, which could have an impact on future environmental outcomes.

Elisa Gallo, MS, University of Padova, analyzed the number of cases at the local pediatric emergency department in Padua, Italy, and found an increase in domestic accidents during lockdown. Gallo's presentation, "Side effects of COVID-19 epidemic in children: the risk of domestic accidents," shows the total number of pediatric emergencies decreased but the incidences of domestic accidents increased, and were significantly greater when compared to the same [time period](#) in 2019.

Office workers, educators and students have had to grapple with the shift from face-to-face communication to web interactions, predominantly through the Zoom platform. After several months of 'Zooming,' and no end in sight, people are reporting a sense of exhaustion with this type of communication, now being referred to as 'Zoom fatigue.' David M. Berube, Ph.D., North Carolina State University, has been studying the underlying complaints behind Zoom fatigue to better understand the

impacts they have on our ability to communicate during this pandemic, and how we may communicate moving forward. His presentation, "Zoom fatigue," will discuss results that can be used to inform future experiments and surveys.

"As long as we turn to these platforms as protocol in times of pandemics, learning about how human communication is affected by stay-at-home and social distancing orders will be co-requisites for communication resiliency training and procedural protocol setting," states Berube.

Provided by Society for Risk Analysis

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