

ED visits for pediatric mental health issues up during COVID-19

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(HealthDay)—The proportion of emergency department visits for

pediatric mental health (MH) conditions increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a research letter published online April 30 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Polina Krass, M.D., from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and colleagues assessed changes in the demographic characteristics and clinical outcomes of pediatric emergency department visits for mental [health](#) conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis included 11,490 [patients](#) (aged 5 to 24 years) presenting to a tertiary children's [hospital](#) emergency department (between Jan. 1, 2018, and Jan. 1, 2021) with an MH diagnosis.

The researchers found that the mean number of monthly MH visits significantly decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic (from 338.6 to 260.8 visits per month), but the proportion of emergency department visits for MH conditions significantly increased (from 4.0 to 5.7 percent). During the pandemic, patients with emergency department MH visits were significantly more likely to be female, White, and older than 12 years of age, and they were also more likely to have commercial health insurance. There was a higher adjusted odds of admission to the hospital during the pandemic (adjusted odds ratio, 1.4), with longer adjusted lengths of stay for patients admitted for MH conditions during the COVID-19 [pandemic](#) (3.4 days longer).

"Our findings may reflect challenges in disposition to definitive MH care and may suggest a scarcity of MH treatment resources," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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