

# Seniors report medical care missed during the pandemic

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Medicare beneficiaries experienced limited care access during the

COVID-19 pandemic, although there was a decrease in forgone medical care over time, according to a study published online Dec. 30 in *JAMA Health Forum*.

Sungchul Park, Ph.D., M.P.H., and Jim P. Stimpson, Ph.D., from Drexel University in Philadelphia, examined trends in and reasons for forgone medical care among Medicare beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were obtained for 23,058 Medicare beneficiaries.

The researchers found that from the week of June 7, 2020, to the weeks of April 4 to 25, 2021, the rates of reported forgone medical care because of COVID-19 decreased, with the largest difference in rates seen between June 7 and July 12, 2020 (22.4 to 15.9 percent). About 70 percent of forgone medical care was explained by physician-driven factors. There was a trend toward a decrease in the proportion who reported forgoing medical care because of physician-driven factors, from 66.2 percent in the week of July 7, 2020, to 44.7 percent in the weeks of April 4 to 25, 2021. The likelihood of forgone [medical care](#) was 4, 3, and 3 percent higher among those who reported feeling more stressed or anxious, more lonely or sad, and less socially connected, respectively, than those who did not.

"Policy makers must continue to identify effective means of meeting the forgone care backlog and maintaining continuity of care, especially for those with [mental health problems](#)," the authors write.

**More information:** Sungchul Park et al, Trends in Self-reported Forgone Medical Care Among Medicare Beneficiaries During the COVID-19 Pandemic, *JAMA Health Forum* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jamahealthforum.2021.4299](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2021.4299)

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