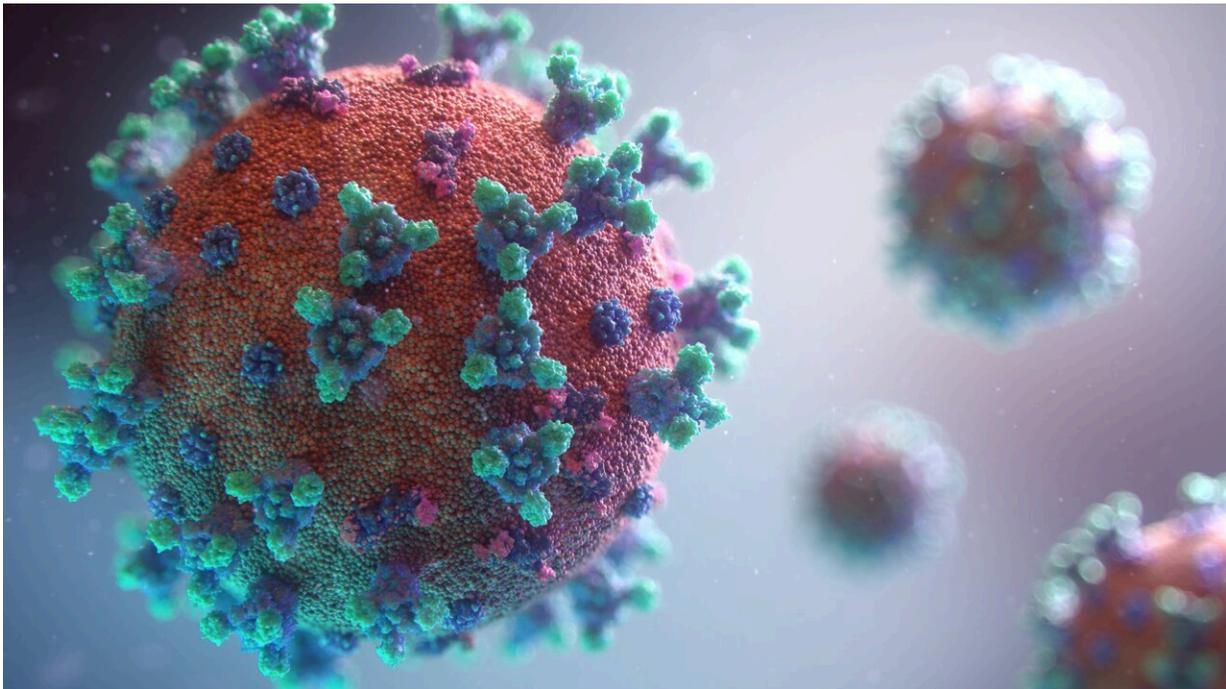


Study: COVID surges caused higher mortality among non-COVID patients

January 20 2023



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Overall patient care suffered during the coronavirus pandemic when COVID-19 surges swamped U.S. hospitals, especially in patients 45 years and older, a study by a Kennesaw State University researcher shows.

According to assistant professor of economics Weiwei Chen, who began

her [research](#) when COVID peaked during the summer of 2020, non-COVID patients had poorer outcomes in hospitals overwhelmed with large numbers of COVID cases. Based on the research, the odds of an in-hospital death were 1.2 times higher among those non-COVID patients than before the onset of the pandemic. The study was published in *The American Journal of Managed Care*.

"Multiple factors contributed to the increase in [mortality rates](#) with COVID spikes, but resource constraints seem to be the main reason, which includes, for example, healthcare worker burnout, staff shortages and reduced bed space," said Chen.

While the research was not positive during the early part of the pandemic, Chen said that some patterns observed during the period may suggest ways to alleviate overcrowding and falling patient outcomes in the future. For example, discharging [hospital patients](#) to [home care](#) grew during the pandemic, while discharging to skilled nursing facilities declined. It shows the promise of home health care as an alternative care option during the pandemic.

"A major implication is that it is going to be very important to monitor patient outcomes at hospitals during pandemics in real time, even though it may be very difficult," she said. "That is the best way to ensure the best possible patient outcomes."

Chen's research used data from a large insurance claims clearinghouse, which covered hospitals nationwide. She said she hopes the implications of the research include better preparation for future pandemics or large-scale illnesses.

"It's important research like this that makes me especially proud of the faculty we have here in Coles College," said Robin Cheramie, dean of the Coles College of Business. "Dr. Chen's research challenges us to

learn from the [pandemic](#) and includes key insights into what can be done to lessen the most dramatic effects of a large-scale event in the future. She is among many KSU faculty aiming to make a difference through research, not just for the sake of research, but the community as a whole."

More information: Weiwei Chen et al, COVID-19 Surges and Hospital Outcomes in the United States, *The American Journal of Managed Care* (2022). [DOI: 10.37765/ajmc.2022.89264](https://doi.org/10.37765/ajmc.2022.89264)

Provided by Kennesaw State University

Citation: Study: COVID surges caused higher mortality among non-COVID patients (2023, January 20) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-01-covid-surges-higher-mortality-non-covid.html>

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