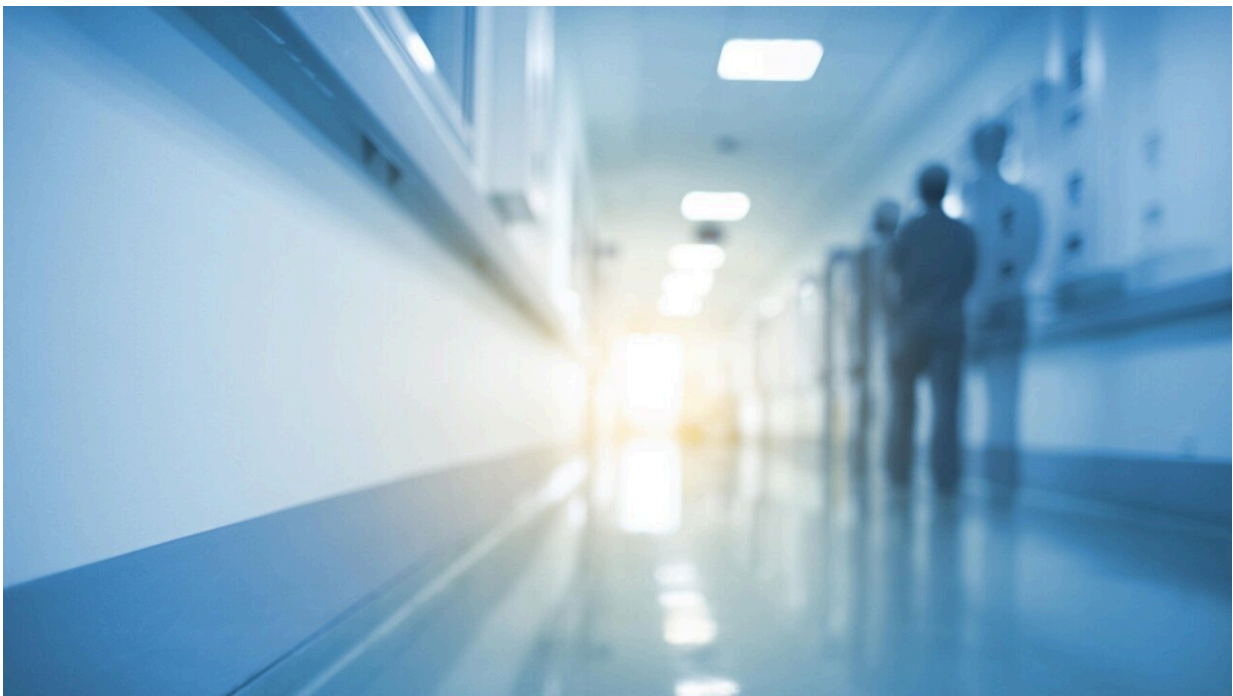


Drop in ED visits, admissions seen in hospitals targeted by ransomware

May 31 2024, by Elana Gotkine



In hospitals targeted by ransomware attacks, there are transient decreases in emergency department visits and inpatient admissions, according to a [research letter](#) published online May 29 in the *Journal of the American*

Medical Association.

Rahi Abouk, Ph.D., from William Paterson University Cotsakos College of Business in Wayne, New Jersey, and David Powell, Ph.D., from RAND in Arlington, Virginia, examined disruptive [ransomware attacks](#) against hospitals in California from 2014 to 2020 and analyzed emergency department and inpatient admissions in attacked and nearby hospitals. Eight ransomware attacks that led to [disruptions](#) in 15 hospitals were identified; 355 hospitals were unattacked.

The researchers found that in the week before the attack, there were a mean of 740.90 emergency department visits and 182.25 inpatient admissions in attacked hospitals. Emergency department visits and inpatient admissions decreased by 8.10 and 8.16 percent in the week after the attack, increasing to 16.21 and 16.62 percent, respectively, in the second week.

Within eight weeks, these decreases returned to pre-attack levels. Increases were observed in emergency department visits up to four weeks in nearby hospitals, reaching 7.10 percent in week 3. Inpatient admissions did not change significantly at nearby hospitals.

"This study found a temporary decrease in emergency department visits and inpatient admissions in hospitals targeted by ransomware attacks and a temporary increase in [emergency department](#) visits in unattacked nearby hospitals in California, suggesting that the consequences of such attacks are broader than the targeted hospitals," the authors write.

More information: Rahi Abouk et al, Ransomware Attacks, ED Visits and Inpatient Admissions in Targeted and Nearby Hospitals, *JAMA* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2024.7752](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2024.7752)

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