Increase in non-COVID-19 respiratory infections predicted this winter

9 August 2022

At least 55% of respiratory disease hospitalizations during the pandemic's peak were caused by non-SARS-CoV-2 infections, according to a study published in The Lancet Regional Health—Europe. The team behind the research, led by the University of Bristol and funded by Pfizer Inc., analyzed data from 135,014 hospitalizations from two hospitals in Bristol between August 2020 and November 2021. Of these, 12,248 (98%) patients, comprising mainly older adults, consented to participate in the study.

Following further analysis, the team showed that of the 12,248 aLRTD hospitalizations, 55% (6,909) were due to infection with no evidence of SARS-CoV-2, while confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection only accounted for 26% (3,178) of respiratory infections. The remaining 17% (2,161) were due to infection with no infective cause.

Adam Finn, Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Bristol, Director of the Bristol Vaccine Centre at Bristol Medical School and lead of Bristol UNCOVER (Bristol COVID Emergency Research Group), said: "What is really surprising from our results is just how much other non-COVID respiratory infections there was during this time, other infections clearly didn't just disappear and despite significant public health measures, including both vaccination and non-pharmaceutical intervention such as masks, our findings show there was still a high incidence of non-COVID-19 disease causing hospitalizations alongside COVID-19 patients."

Dr. Catherine Hyams, Post-Doctoral Clinical Research Fellow, Principal Investigator for the AvonCAP study and one of the study's lead authors, added: "Our results really highlight not only the huge burden of respiratory infection on the NHS and other healthcare systems, but also how bad things may get this winter. It is therefore essential that appropriate healthcare planning and resource allocation is undertaken to care for patients with respiratory conditions, in addition to implementation of public health measures to reduce respiratory disease burden and improve patient outcomes."

The study is part of AvonCAP, an ongoing collaborative surveillance project funded by Pfizer Inc., which records detailed information on every adult patient admitted to Bristol's two large NHS hospitals with symptoms, signs and/or X-ray...
evidence of acute disease in the lungs.


Provided by University of Bristol