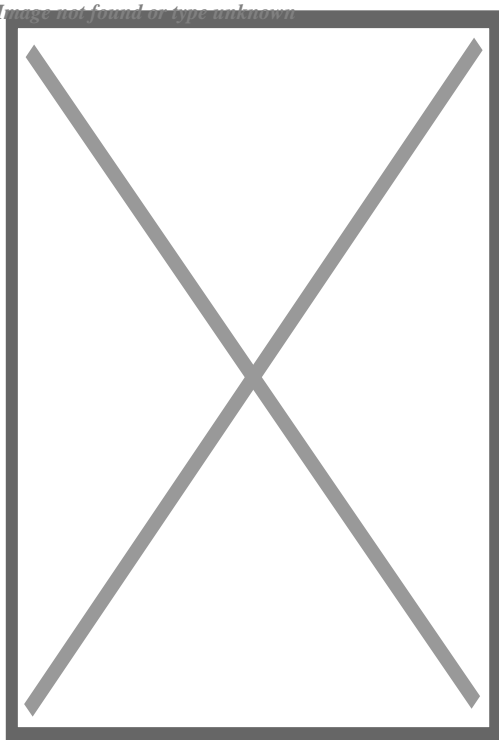


# *U.S. study shows cardiovascular deaths rose in first years of COVID*

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## **U.S. study shows cardiovascular deaths rose in first years of COVID**

Washington, March 2 (RHC)-- Deaths from cardiovascular diseases rose during the first two years of the pandemic and peaked when COVID-19 deaths did in the U.S., a new study found. These deaths occurred across five waves of COVID-19 deaths from March 2020 to March 2022, according to the peer-reviewed research published in the journal *Nature Cardiovascular Research* on February 27th.

Researchers from Shanghai and Hong Kong offer possible reasons for why the rise in cardiovascular deaths was seen in data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics.

The U.S. saw 90,160 more cardiovascular deaths than expected during the first two years of COVID-19, according to the study. There were nearly 5% more “excess deaths” due to cardiovascular diseases, with the most prevalent ones identified as ischemic heart disease, hypertensive disease, cerebrovascular disease and other circulatory system diseases, the researchers wrote.

In total, over 1.9 million cardiovascular disease deaths were documented by the NCHS during the study period, the work noted. Potential explanations for the rise in these deaths, according to the researchers, include the strain COVID-19 placed on the healthcare system, which indirectly disrupted emergency cardiovascular care. Additionally, people experiencing cardiovascular issues may have been hesitant in seeking treatment, or avoided it, over concerns about catching COVID-19 in a medical setting.

In April 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services reported how the pandemic affected access to healthcare, including the postponement of in-person office visits and procedures for patients across the U.S. Additionally, it noted that at the time, emergency department visits were substantially lower.

“A nationwide or regional lockdown may lead to increased physical inactivity, poor dietary intake, interruption of long-term disease management, income loss and so on,” the authors wrote in providing more context on the excess cardiovascular deaths.

Heart issues experienced after contracting COVID-19 may also have a “profound impact,” the researchers said, based on emerging evidence.

COVID-19 infection is linked to lingering health issues, including heart problems, which are among the most common long COVID symptoms, according to the CDC. The study noted prior research that found a COVID-19 infection creates a greater risk of subsequently developing cardiovascular diseases, citing two studies published by Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, a clinical epidemiologist studying long COVID and the director of the Clinical Epidemiology Center at Washington University in St. Louis, and others.

The study authors wrote “further evaluation” is needed on the matter to “disentangle the excess (cardiovascular disease) deaths attributed to interrupted healthcare systems” and heart issues arising after a COVID-19 infection.

The study comes after the American Heart Association reported the largest jump in deaths due cardiovascular-related causes in 2020, the first year of the pandemic in the United States.

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