June 8: COVID-19 Clinical Update
COVID-19 Collateral Damage and Walgreens Prescription Delivery

In today's COVID-19 Clinical Update, Sadiya S. Khan, MD, shares information about an excess number of deaths resulting from delayed or deferred care for other illnesses during the pandemic. Also, Walgreens Pharmacy in Galter Pavilion will FedEx prescriptions to patients affected by store closures on the South and West Sides of Chicago.

COVID-19 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
Following the declaration of a national emergency due to COVID-19 on March 13, data continue to emerge addressing the direct and indirect health impacts resulting from delayed or deferred care. Reports from Italy, Austria, Denmark — and, now, the U.S. — suggest marked drops in the number of patients presenting to the Emergency Department, particularly for cardiac conditions. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released estimates of higher-than-expected death rates for the current year.

A report from the **National Syndromic Surveillance Program**, which collects and monitors electronic health record data in collaboration with the CDC, and local and state public health departments, indicates that ED visits declined approximately 42% in April compared with prior years. The largest declines occurred in the Northeast and Northern California, two regions that had a large number of COVID-19 cases. Kaiser Permanente reported declines of 48% in rates of acute myocardial infarction in March 2020, compared with the prior two years. We examined this issue across NM and observed a 52% peak reduction of weekly ED visits in early April, compared with January of this year.

The excess deaths reported by the CDC are calculated from the number of deaths in recent weeks compared with historical data from 2013 to 2019. In the U.S., between 98,102 and 132,335 excess deaths have occurred since February 1. Of these, 21,089 to 44,639 deaths are not attributed to COVID-19. The leading cause of excess deaths not related to COVID-19 is cardiovascular disease (n=16,940).

Overall, indirect morbidity and mortality have emerged as major consequences of reduced healthcare utilization and postponement of care. While fear of COVID-19 transmission remains a concern, public health messaging needs to emphasize the importance of seeking care for serious or life-threatening symptoms, and reinforcing sanitation and safety measures in place to protect the health of patients in our facilities.

NMH WALGREENS WILL FEDEX PRESCRIPTIONS TO PATIENTS AFFECTED BY STORE CLOSURES

Social unrest forced many Walgreens stores in Chicago to close, particularly those located on the South and West Sides of the city. Walgreens Pharmacy in Galter Pavilion offers next-day prescription delivery Monday through Friday.

Patients must request next day delivery by 3 pm the day prior (orders placed on Friday will arrive on Monday). Delivery is free, but patients have to provide payment for copays before their prescription can be sent. Control medications or items that require refrigeration are also eligible for delivery from the NMH location only.

Patients who wish to pick up their prescription in person at an open Walgreens store can have their prescription transferred if their local store is closed. Controlled medications cannot be transferred, so the prescriber should send a new script to the location where the patient will pick it up.

Local stores also offer delivery, but their delivery dates and times vary, and they are not authorized to deliver controlled medications. Refer to **walgreens.com** or the Walgreens app for the latest status on store openings and hours.

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Thank you for your extraordinary dedication and collaboration in providing exceptional care to our patients and supporting one another during this unprecedented crisis. If you have questions or would like to share the story of an NM hero, please email us at **covid-19md@nm.org**.

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