## Evidence Search Service Results of your search request

## COVID-19: encouraging vulnerable groups to attend for emergencies & appointments

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## Summary

Several newspapers report on the impact of COVID-19 discouraging the seriously ill from attending the emergency department. Messaging about COVID-19 and discouraging unnecessary hospital attendance has had an adverse impact on emergency and vital appointment attendance. As yet there does not appear to be a mechanism for encouraging people to overcome their fear and attend in an emergency and for essential appointments.

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NHS England: Combined performance summary <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/combined-performance-summary/>

BBC report 6 April: "Dial 999 for stroke emergencies despite coronavirus" <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-52173471> - According to this report by the BBC, latest figures for England and Scotland suggest attendance to A&E has dropped by over a third on the same week last year

Clinical Services Journal: Stroke concern... <https://www.clinicalservicesjournal.com/story/32340/stroke-concern-rising-amid-covid-19-crisis-warns-top-charity>

[A. Institutional Publications](#Content4)

Nuffield Trust

[Combined Performance Summary: February - March 2020](#Research621969)

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)

[Delayed access to care for children during COVID-19: our role as paediatricians - position statement](#Research621339)

Royal College of Physicians (RCP)

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## A. Institutional Publications

#### Nuffield Trust

**Combined Performance Summary: February - March 2020** (2020)

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=257fc1779980b54811105973f599dda9)

A&E: The total number of A&E attendances fell to around 1.5 million in March 2020 – 22% lower than in February 2020. In 2019, there was an 11% increase in total A&E attendances between February and March. There was an average of 49,390 A&E attendances per day in March 2020. This is 27% lower than in February 2020. This compares to last year, in 2019, when average attendances per day were approximately the same in February and March, and 2018 when there was a 1.7% increase in March compared to February.

#### Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)

**Delayed access to care for children during COVID-19: our role as paediatricians - position statement** (2020)

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=d13ab5cb8a77af1a38c1d70488524e90)

Evidence is emerging that children and families are not accessing medical advice and review as soon as is needed.

#### Royal College of Physicians (RCP)

**Patients and the public must continue to seek medical help for serious conditions during this COVID-19 pandemic** (2020)

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=9f0c070b047322187b7997fc8cdd87cd)

The Academy of Royal Medical Colleges has published a statement encouraging the public to continue seeking medical help during the coronavirus outbreak, even if it isn’t COVID-19-related.

#### The Health Foundation

**Today's data show COVID-19 is having a dramatic impact on how people seek care** (2020)

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=3ca71a1e95462f889c4908b2338c38c6)

Responding to the publication of the monthly NHS England performance statistics, Tim Gardner, Senior Policy Fellow at the Health Foundation, said: 'The NHS and social care system is making heroic efforts to respond to the unprecedented challenge of coronavirus (COVID-19), and that is having a dramatic impact on how people seek care and the care that is being delivered. Having risen year-on-year since records began, today’s data show a substantial drop in A&E visits last month, with over 600,000 fewer people (a 29% drop) attending A&E compared to the same time last year and 120,000 fewer people being admitted. Meanwhile calls to NHS 111 have surged – there were more than twice as many last month compared to the same time last year. 'This suggests that many of those who might have attended A&E previously could be seeking clinical advice elsewhere, and that 111 is playing a critical role in advising people on how to access care. On the face of it, this may indicate that people are following the official advice to try to avoid going straight to A&E. 'It is important that people continue to stay at home as much as possible to slow the spread of the virus, reduce pressure on the NHS, and enable the service to tackle COVID-19 by treating those who are most seriously ill. However, people should continue to feel able to seek treatment for serious conditions and further work is needed to understand who is not coming to A&E and whether unmet needs are being stored up for the future.' There were 29% fewer A&E attendances in March 2020 compared to March 2019

## B. Original Research

1. **Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic in Populations With Serious Mental Illness**  
   Druss B. JAMA Psychiatry 2020;:3 April.

[...] People with serious mental illnesses should be provided with up-to-date, accurate information about strategies for mitigating risk and knowing when to seek medical treatment for COVID-19. Patient-facing materials developed for general populations will need to be tailored to address limited health literacy and challenges in implementing physical distancing recommendations because of poverty and unstable living situations. Messaging will need to provide assurances that those who seek care will not face penalties with regards to cost or immigration status. Patients will need support in maintaining healthy habits, including diet and physical activity, as well as self-management of chronic mental and physical health conditions.

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=b12d666e8dfc2285272e0395918c4686)

1. **Coronavirus response could create 'very serious unintended consequences'**  
   Illman J. HSJ: Health Service Journal 2020;:5 April.

National NHS leaders are to take action over growing fears that the “unintended consequences” of focusing so heavily on tackling covid-19 could do more harm than the virus, HSJ has learned. NHS England analysts have been tasked with the challenging task of identifying patients who may not have the virus but may be at risk of significant harm or death because they are missing vital appointments or not attending emergency departments, with both the service and public so focused on covid-19. [...] Data collections already suggest work will need to be done to contact patients from a wide range of groups, including heart disease and stroke patients. Public Health England data published last week showed ED attendances had plummeted to around half of the normal level in the three weeks to Sunday 29 March – an unprecedented shift in demand. This included a reduction by about half in attendances for heart complaints. There have also been multiple warnings about fewer people coming to hospital when they were having a stroke, prompting a warning from the national clinical director for stroke, Deb Lowe. On Twitter she highlighted “empty stroke beds” in hospitals and said: “Please don’t stay at home if you think you are having a stroke.”

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=105ee544861d616b1c185da063cfed97)

1. **Exclusive: Children ‘may have died’ due to coronavirus fears**  
   West D. HSJ: Health Service Journal 2020;:3 April.

Children may have died from non-coronavirus illnesses because they are not coming to hospital quickly enough, amid concerns NHS 111 may be giving flawed advice to stay away, according to senior paediatricians. Several senior paediatric leaders in London raised serious concerns to HSJ. They said several children in the past week had been admitted to intensive care in London, and had been harmed — and, in some cases, died — because of the issue, though they did not want to identify particular hospitals or cases. The sources said it was a national problem. One senior source at a children’s hospital said: “Some children without covid-19 have come to harm as a result of [the] current situation… changes ought to be made to 111 for children.” The source described it as “collateral damage” from the covid-19 situation.

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=804ac640a12e995a6ae9ebf172589a48)

1. **Maintaining HIV care during the COVID-19 pandemic**  
   Jiang H. The Lancet 2020;:6 April.

Approximately 37·9 million people living with HIV2are at risk of infection with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes COVID-19. Although some international institutions, in collaboration with governments and community partners, are working to sustain HIV service provision for people living with HIV, the COVID-19 pandemic presents several barriers and challenges to the HIV care continuum.

[Available online at this link](https://www.knowledgeshare.nhs.uk/index.php?PageID=link_resolver&link=adeb5d51c4ef69b91ed230905064ce66)

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You can then access the papers by simply entering your username and password. If you do not have easy access to the internet to gain access, please let us know and we can download the papers for you.

### Guidance on searching within online documents

Links are provided to the full text of each document. Relevant extracts have been copied and pasted into these results. Rather than browse through lengthy documents, you can search for specific words as follows:

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Click on the Search button (illustrated with binoculars). This will open up a search window. Type in the term you need to find and links to all of the references to that term within the document will be displayed in the window. You can jump to each reference by clicking it.

**Word documents**  
Select Edit from the menu, the Find and type in your term in the search box which is presented. The search function will locate the first use of the term in the document. By pressing 'next' you will jump to further references.

## Search History

EMBASE; Google (Advanced); Health Foundation; HSJ; King’s Fund; NHS England; NICE; Nuffield Trust; Royal College of Physicians (RCP); PubMed; TRIP PRO

**Date range used** (5 years, 10 years):   
**Limits used** (gender, article/study type, etc.):   
**Search terms and notes**: COVID-19, unrelated, non-, emergency, admission, attendance, appointment\* vulnerable, stroke, heart, parent, child\*, patient\*

**Date of request:** 8th April, 2020  
**Date of completion:** 10th April, 2020

**Audience/Context:** Clinical Ethics Advisory Committee Acute hospital and Chief of Medicine

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