

Declining Trend in Emergency Department Visits During The COVID-19 Pandemic in A Community Hospital Health System in California

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In our previous correspondence titled “trends in outpatient emergency department census during the COVID-19 pandemic at a California health system” published at the American Journal of Emergency Medicine on March 28, 2021, analysis of data from AHMC Health System (AHMC) noticed the trend of decreased ED census corresponding to the beginning and resurgence of COVID-19 [1]. A drastic decrease of 54.7% in outpatient ED visits in April 2020 and a drop of 56.6% in January 2021.

Notably, a similar trend was also observed by Giannoucho, et al (2021) [2]. This trend may be due to patient reluctance in non-urgent hospital visits during the pandemic [3-5].

AHMC Health System is a network of hospitals, mainly serving the Los Angeles and Orange county regions with 1,400 beds and 3,000 affiliated physicians. Aside from looking at outpatient ED visits, AHMC had a 32.1% decrease in overall ED visits from 2019 to 2020. In particular, same-period analysis reveals that ED visits had a dramatic decline of 51.8% from 16,279 visits in 2020 to 7,847 visits in 2021.

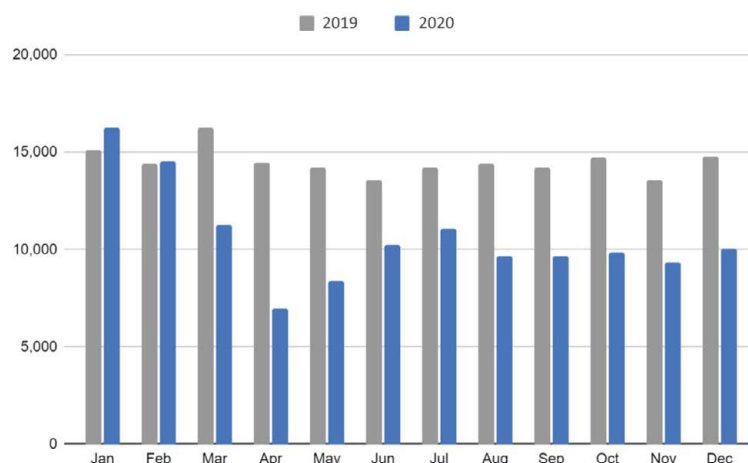


Figure 1. AHMC’s trends in monthly overall ED visits in 2020 compared to 2019

These additional data confirmed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare system in the U.S. and possible long-term consequences on the individual health status.

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