

8 April 2020

BRIEF19

A daily review of covid-19 research and policy.

RESEARCH BRIEFING

Is the covid-19 pandemic concerning the general public?

In a creative [study](#) published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, researchers surveyed the general public on Twitter, Facebook, and Nextdoor. Over 9,000 people completed the survey. The majority of respondents were women identifying as “white,” and who reported having earned college or graduate degrees. The vast majority of people (over two-thirds) were reported feeling “very” or “extremely” concerned about covid-19; 95 percent reported they had made significant lifestyle changes in response to the pandemic. Some of those lifestyle changes included more hand washing and social distancing. Nearly 75 percent of those who completed the survey reported stockpiling food and other supplies. Almost 20 percent of those surveyed reported self-isolating “all the time.” Most people reported fears of becoming sick and being unable to obtain medical care. Fourteen percent reported that they had experienced reduced wages and/or reduced work hours, and 1.5 percent (102 people) reported losing their jobs. Despite these concerns, only 53 percent reported that they would be willing to be evaluated by a healthcare provider remotely via telehealth. Apparently even during pandemics, many patients prefer in-person encounters with their physicians. To our knowledge, this is the first survey to explore the general public’s concerns regarding the covid-19 pandemic.

--Joshua Niforatos, MD, Research Section Editor

POLICY BRIEFING

CDC begins search for the true denominator.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced that it will begin an attempt to determine how many total people in the United States have been [infected](#) by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Because of inadequate testing and symptom-free patients, many people are unaware that they were ever infected. The agency will analyze blood from people who were not diagnosed but live in “hot spots” to see how widely the virus circulated. Another part of the study will assess blood samples from all over the country, in a similar effort. A third component will focus on special populations, with a priority on healthcare workers. If this work is successful, it may help the CDC plan for future SARS-CoV-2 surveillance. The study will also help to provide a more accurate assessment of morbidity and mortality rates related to the infection. *Statnews*.

--Jordan M. Warchol, MD, MPH

Custody battles behind the front lines.

Yesterday, the New York Times [reported](#) that some physicians and first responders, among others, were being asked by their ex-partners to give up custody of their children. The rationale being offered is that for children whose parents have shared custody, spending time with the parent who is a healthcare worker puts them at increased risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2. However, with appropriate use of personal protective equipment while at work, and other steps at home such as changing out of work clothes immediately, and careful hygiene, the risk should be

minimal. In fact, countless frontline workers are safely living with their families during this pandemic. Courts have not yet determined how to approach such requests, but policies that unfairly discriminate against front line workers serving our communities could add undue stress to those already under tremendous pressure during this crisis. *New York Times*.

An essential vote.

Yesterday, Wisconsin became the first state to [hold](#) its presidential primary under an active stay-at-home order. Governor Tony Evers had tried to ban in-person voting while a lower court tried to extend the absentee deadline. Both of these efforts were struck down, the first by the state Supreme Court, the second by the Supreme Court of the United States. Because polls had to allow six feet between voters, reducing the flow of voters, and booths had to be sanitized between voters, poll sites reported extensively long lines. Some precincts adopted drive-by voting and outdoor voting. The next scheduled primary is slated for May 2nd in Kansas. *CNBC*.

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Brief19 is a daily executive summary of covid-19-related medical research, news, and public policy. It was founded and created by frontline emergency medicine physicians with expertise in medical research critique, health policy, and public policy.