

ISSN: 2688-836X



Impact of COVID-19 Surges on Emergency Department and Yelp Review Scores at a Community Health System

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Submission:  April 25, 2023

Published:  April 26, 2023

Volume 14 - Issue 4

How to cite this article: Wen-Ta Chiu, Stanley Toy, John Chon, Steve Giordano, Kaveh Aflakian, Wan-Yi Lin, Pei-Chen Pan, Chia Hsing Yeh*, et al. Impact of COVID-19 Surges on Emergency Department and Yelp Review Scores at a Community Health System. Nov Res Sci. 14(4). NRS.000844. 2023.

DOI: [10.31031/NRS.2023.14.000844](https://doi.org/10.31031/NRS.2023.14.000844)

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Opinion

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to healthcare systems worldwide, and EDs have been at the forefront of this challenge [1,2]. EDs have had to adapt rapidly to the changing circumstances and increased demand for their services while ensuring the safety of their patients and staff [3]. This study provides valuable insights into the impact of the pandemic on EDs and patient experiences, and we believe that its findings have significant implications for the future of EDs and healthcare systems more broadly. The study showed that during surging months, a decrease in ED visits and an increase in ED admission rates were observed. Online rating platforms such as Yelp can offer patients & their family to rate the hospitals on a scale of one to five stars and write a review. The score was used to evaluate the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. During the surging periods (First surging period: June 2020-August 2020; Second surging period: November 2020-January 2021) (Figure 1), Yelp rating scores also decreased from 3.0 or above to 2.5. These findings are concerning, as they suggest that the pandemic has had a significant impact on EDs and has negatively impacted patient experiences (Figure 2).

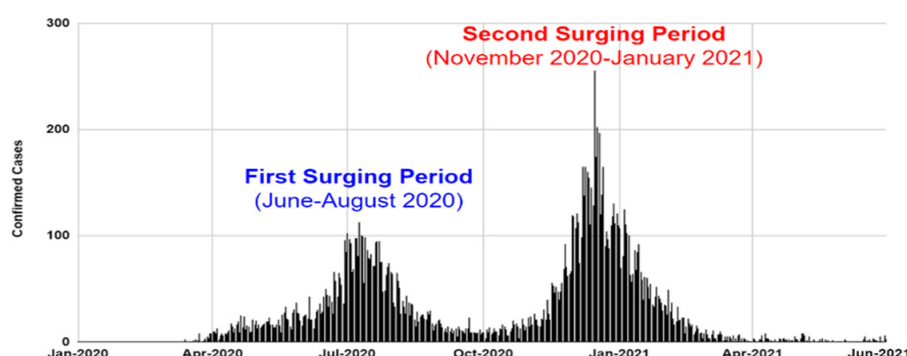


Figure 1: A community health system's COVID-19 cases, January 2020-June 2021.

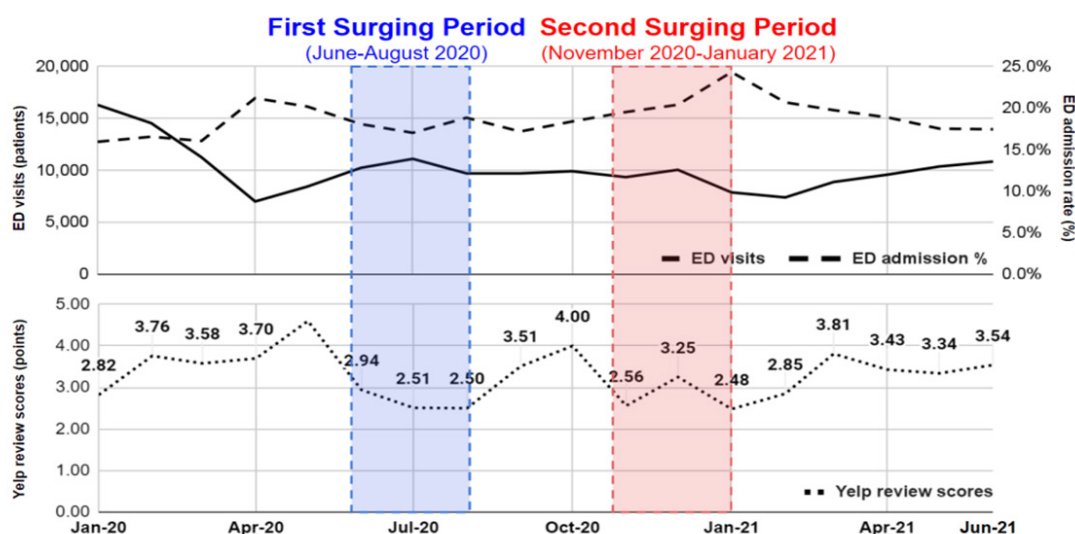


Figure 2: ED visit, ED admission rates & Yelp review scores during 2 COVID-19 surging periods, June 2020 - August 2020 and November 2020 - January 2021.

The decrease in ED visits during surging months may be attributed to fear and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, as well as concerns about the safety of visiting hospitals [4,5]. Patients may be avoiding EDs for fear of exposure to the virus or because they believe that their condition is not severe enough to warrant a visit to the ED [6-8]. This highlights the need for clear communication and education to address these concerns and encourage patients to seek timely and appropriate care. It is crucial to ensure that patients understand the importance of seeking care when they need it and that EDs are safe and accessible places for them to receive that care. The increase in ED admission rates during surging months is a concerning trend, as it suggests that EDs are struggling to cope with the demands of the pandemic and may be at risk of being overwhelmed. This could lead to delays in care, reduced quality of care, and increased risk of adverse outcomes for patients [9-11]. To address this issue, urgent action is needed to provide additional resources and support to EDs and their staff. This could include providing additional staff, increasing bed capacity, and ensuring that EDs have the necessary equipment and supplies to care for patients effectively.

Finally, the decrease in Yelp review scores during surging months is a concerning trend, as it suggests that patients' experiences in EDs are being negatively impacted by the pandemic. This may be due to a range of factors, including longer wait times, reduced availability of resources, and increased stress and workload for ED staff [12,13]. While Yelp review scores can be a useful tool for monitoring patient experiences and identifying areas for improvement, it is important to note that they may not always be representative or accurate and should be interpreted with caution [14]. However, they can be an important indicator of patient satisfaction and can help to identify areas where improvements are needed [15,16].

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on EDs and patient experiences.

The findings highlight the urgent need for additional resources and support for EDs and their staff to ensure that patients receive timely and appropriate care during surging periods. Additionally, monitoring patient experiences through Yelp review scores can be a useful tool for identifying areas for improvement and ensuring that patients receive high-quality care. It is essential that we continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on EDs and healthcare systems more broadly and take the necessary steps to ensure that patients receive the care they need when they need it.

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