

# COVID-19 community care in Israel– A nationwide cohort study from a large health maintenance organization

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Among the many medical challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, management of the majority of COVID-19 patients in community outpatient settings rather than in hospital is crucial for the resource allocation of healthcare systems. This real-life study describes COVID-19 patients in three management settings: two outpatient settings and one inpatient. **Methods:** A retrospective database cohort study was conducted in a large Israeli Health Maintenance Organization. All laboratory-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 cases diagnosed 2/28/2020-6/20/2020, were included. Cases in the community setting were managed by physicians and other healthcare personnel through a nationwide remote monitoring center, using preliminary telehealth triage, 24/7 virtual care, all based on the individual patient's clinical and social circumstances. Data were extracted from medical records. Outcome parameters included hospital admission, disease severity, need for respiratory support and mortality. **Results:** 5,525 cases tested positive. Seventy-seven cases who live in long-term facilities were excluded. 5448 cases, aged  $36.36 \pm 20.31$  (range 0-97 years) were enrolled. 88.7% were initially managed as outpatient either at home or in designated hotels, and 11.3% were hospitalized. 3.1% and 2.1% of the patients who were initially allocated for home or hotel stay, respectively, later required hospitalization. The main reason for hospitalization was dyspnea; twelve were diagnosed with severe disease. Fifty-six patients (1.3%) died, five (0.1%) of whom were initially allocated to the outpatient settings. **Conclusions:** Care for appropriately selected COVID-19 patients in the community provides a safe and effective option. This can contribute to reducing the hospitalization burden, with no evidence of increased morbidity or mortality.

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