

As deaths continue in Italy, a lesson for the United States

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(HealthDay)—In a harrowing harbinger of what might come in places

like New York City, a new report out of Italy shows the death rate for hospitalized COVID-19 patients continues to grow almost 40 days after the country's first case was reported.

Italy has passed China for [coronavirus](#) cases, reporting close to 106,000 cases and nearly 12,500 deaths, a Johns Hopkins tally showed Wednesday morning. The virus has been especially deadly for older Italians.

Data gathered until March 30 suggests that the number of patients in intensive care in both the northern Lombardy region and Italy as a whole has peaked. However, the number of deaths in hospitals will still increase at the maximum rate for several more days, and significant numbers of deaths may continue until at least mid-April, the report authors said.

Italy was slow to enact social distancing orders following the first reports of COVID-19 cases in the country, a factor that experts believe may have played a part in how quickly coronavirus cases overwhelmed the nation's hospitals.

Models show that the maximum daily increase in deaths in [hospital patients](#) is likely to occur during days 36 to 40 (March 28 to April 1) in Lombardy, and days 36 to 41 (March 28 to April 2) across Italy.

Data show that for ICU patient numbers, the day of maximum increase was Day 22 (March 15) in Lombardy and Day 25 (March 18) across Italy.

"The difference between Lombardy and Italy is due to the social distancing measures adopted first in Lombardy and then all over the country. Every day counted," said report author Davide Manca, a professor of process systems engineering at Politecnico di Milano, Italy.

He prepared the report for the European Society of Anaesthesiology (ESA).

"We expect to reach the date on which there will be little or no further increase of COVID-19 patients in ICU to be around day 45 (April 6) in Lombardy and day 47 (April 8) in Italy," Manca said in an ESA news release.

The data suggests that numbers of patients in [intensive care](#) should begin to fall across Lombardy and Italy after these dates, depending on the continued enforcement of Italy's strict quarantine measures.

The report also said that the time spent in ICU by patients who die is about 10 to 12 days in Italy, which is longer than the nine to 10 days seen in China.

More information: The World Health Organization has more on [COVID-19](#).

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