

# Number of trauma injuries falls amidst coronavirus slowdown

April 20 2020, by Daniel Kelly

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After social distancing became more prevalent due to the coronavirus, emergency departments in the Miami Valley saw a decrease in trauma injuries. Surgeons at the Wright State University Boonshoft School of

Medicine have never seen such low numbers of trauma injuries.

The medical school's [trauma](#) surgeons all work in the [trauma service](#) at Miami Valley Hospital. It is the Level I trauma center in the Dayton region and typically gets the sickest of the sick in trauma patients.

"This service has dropped over 50 percent since social distancing came into being in Ohio," said Randy Woods, M.D., associate professor and interim chair of the Department of Surgery. "Our typical inpatient census runs 55 to 70 this time of year, and in the past few weeks we have been in the 20s to low 30s."

There are other possible reasons for why the drop in numbers has occurred. Woods perceives that there may be a connection with the closing of restaurants and bars.

There have been reductions in [drunk driving](#) as a result of the closures. Injuries resulting from drunk driving are typically one of the largest sources of visits to the emergency room.

"If there is a silver lining to any of this, a decrease in driving under the influence may be one such point," Woods said. "I do not have the actual numbers to back this up right now, but this seems to be true."

Other types of urgent surgical diseases that the service treats include appendicitis and acute cholecystitis. Numbers for these types of surgeries have also gone down. He says that some patients may not be going to the hospital out of fear of contracting the virus.

"I think the hospitals in the region are doing a remarkable job at making their environments safe for patients," Woods said. "If someone needs a physician, do not fear coming to the hospital."

One demographic on the trauma team that has not appreciably decreased is elderly falls. Woods and others speculate that, with [social distancing](#) in place, a consequence has been that elderly patients are at more risk of falls. This could be due to a minimized support system or that their families may be visiting them less to prevent spreading the virus.

Surgeons have also seen a measurable impact to the [number](#) of elective surgeries. There are diseases such as hernias that would typically have been treated with a surgical procedure. Those surgeries have been postponed due to the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE).

With the smaller inpatient census, the department has decreased the numbers of providers in the facility. It will allow people to rest up for what is undoubtedly going to be a busy season once we begin to return to work and play. More importantly, having fewer people in the hospital has reduced the use of PPE and decreased the risk to the providers in contracting the virus.

"Since we do not know how long this alteration in our [daily activities](#) will last, we do not know how long we will need to have a stockpile of PPE available to use in treating patients with the COVID-19 disease," Woods said.

Provided by Wright State University

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