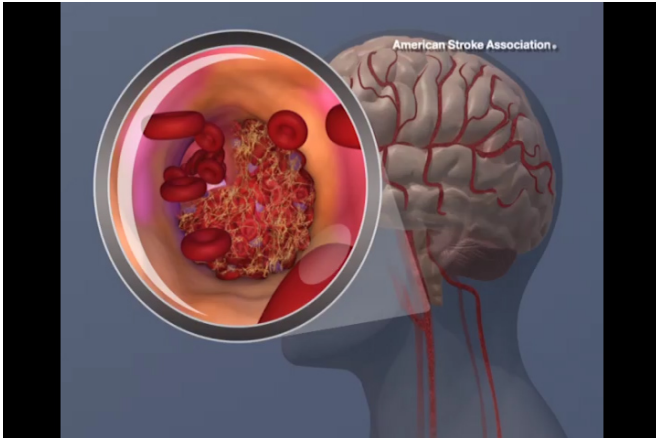


# New study confirms stroke patients are significantly delaying treatment amid COVID-19 pandemic

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A blood clot forming in the carotid artery. Credit: American Heart Association

New research published today in the *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery (JNIS)* shows ischemic stroke patients are arriving to hospitals and treatment centers an average of 160 minutes later during the COVID-19 pandemic, as compared with a similar timeframe in 2019. These delays, say stroke surgeons from the Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery (SNIS), are impacting both survival and recovery.

The first study to confirm suspected [stroke](#) patient avoidance assessed 710 patients presenting with acute ischemic strokes at 12 [stroke centers](#) across six states. It compared the period of February and March 2019 (the baseline period) to February 2020 (the "pre-COVID-19" period) and March 2020 (the "COVID-19" period). In addition to the delay in treatment, the study also found a marked decrease in overall reported [stroke patients](#), from 223 to 167, in these same treatment centers from February to March 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19

pandemic.

Neurointerventionalists with the Get Ahead of Stroke campaign say that in the case of the most serious strokes—known as an emergent large vessel occlusions (ELVO)—up to two million brain cells die each minute. The longer patients wait before treatment, the greater the impact the stroke will have—potentially paralyzing them for life, or worse. Additionally, for every minute lost before receiving appropriate care, there is an associated medical cost of \$1,000 for short- and long-term care. A 160-minute delay amounts to the loss of 320 million [brain cells](#) and \$160,000 in additional medical costs.

"When it comes to stroke treatment, every minute counts. My colleagues and I have been devastated to see patients arriving at the hospital too late for us to help them," said the study's lead author Dr. Clemens Schirmer who is based at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pennsylvania. "Our findings indicate a dire need for [public education](#) to address COVID-19 related fears to ensure people with stroke symptoms seek the lifesaving care they need without delay."

"Stroke care teams across the country have implemented protocols to safeguard patients from COVID-19," said Dr. Richard P. Klucznik, president of SNIS. "A stroke will not go away if you ignore it, and delaying treatment could eliminate your chance for recovery. It's critical to pay attention to any symptoms of stroke and call 911 right away."

Get Ahead of Stroke is a national public education and advocacy campaign designed to improve systems of care for stroke patients. Founded in 2016 by the Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery (SNIS), the campaign is currently working with its partners to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic

does not deter stroke patients from getting the lifesaving care they deserve.

**More information:** Clemens M Schirmer et al. Delayed presentation of acute ischemic strokes during the COVID-19 crisis, *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery* (2020). DOI: [10.1136/neurintsurg-2020-016299](https://doi.org/10.1136/neurintsurg-2020-016299)

Provided by Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery

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