

Global Pandemic Consequences: Lasting Health Effects Beyond the Virus

Emmanuelle Lavaine¹ and Carla Morvan^{*1}

¹CEE-M, Univ. Montpellier, CNRS, INRAE, Institut Agro, Montpellier, 34960, France

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Abstract

This paper investigates the health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by examining non-COVID mortality in France. Rather than focusing on deaths directly attributed to COVID-19, we study the broader consequences of the pandemic as a systemic shock that disrupted access to care, altered health behaviors, and generated potential long-term health risks. Using the date of first COVID-19 hospitalization at the municipal level as an indicator of local exposure, we implement a staggered difference-in-differences design to estimate the causal impact of the pandemic on non-COVID mortality. We find that non-COVID mortality increases following the onset of the pandemic. A finely constructed measure of hospital congestion explains part of this rise, and our analysis of mental-health-related mortality shows no evidence that this channel contributed to the increase. The remaining excess mortality is therefore consistent with delayed health consequences of COVID-19 infections, in line with emerging medical evidence on post-acute sequelae. These results highlight the importance of maintaining access to non-COVID care during major health shocks and the need to monitor post-infection health deterioration beyond the acute phase.

Keywords: Pandemic, Health, Mortality

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^{*}Corresponding author. Email: carla.morvan@umontpellier.fr. Homepage