



Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation
Trust, London SE1 7EH, UK

sebastian.lucas@kcl.ac.uk

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;372:n529

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n529>

Published: 24 February 2021

NON-COVID SERVICES IN THE PANDEMIC

Coronial necropsies show the indirect damage from covid-19

Sebastian B Lucas *emeritus professor of pathology*

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is impacting non-covid care to a greater extent than reducing normal in-hospital care for cancer and urgent cardiac surgery.¹ It is associated with excess deaths in the community from diseases that would normally be diagnosed and treated by GPs and emergency hospital doctors. Pathologists performing medico-legal necropsies see these: Pell and colleagues identified acute myocardial infarction, diabetic ketoacidosis, alcoholism, and suicide in this category.² I add to this list, as consequences of fear of attending hospital, falciparum malaria, venous thromboembolism, and maternal death following self-delivery at home.

Such data will not be identified from Office for National Statistics cause of death certification alone, and many of these indirect deaths from covid-19 will not be subject to an inquest. Epidemiologists must examine the detailed necropsy reports to identify and quantify these deaths as the collateral damage from the pandemic. Coroners and fiscals should be making the reports available, rather than—as at present—confidential.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Iacobucci G. How is the pandemic affecting non-covid services? *BMJ* 2021;372:n215. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n215 pmid: 33483334
- 2 Pell R, Fryer E, Manek S, Winter L, Roberts ISD. Coronial autopsies identify the indirect effects of covid-19. *Lancet Public Health* 2020;5:e474. doi: 10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30180-8 pmid: 32791050

This article is made freely available for use in accordance with BMJ's website terms and conditions for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic or until otherwise determined by BMJ. You may use, download and print the article for any lawful, non-commercial purpose (including text and data mining) provided that all copyright notices and trade marks are retained.