

JUST THE FACTS: WHAT CAUSED COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NURSING HOMES

Location of a nursing home, asymptomatic spread and availability of testing – not quality ratings, infection citations or staffing – were determining factors in COVID-19 outbreaks according to independent analyses by leading academic and health care experts, as well as government researchers.

In a January [report](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) examined data from May 25 through November 22, 2020 and found that trends in community infection rates were similar to those in nursing homes.

These findings are consistent with previous [research](#) conducted by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which examined data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing homes.



KEY FINDINGS

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LOCATION OF FACILITY DETERMINED OUTBREAKS

"According to preliminary research presented, larger facilities located in urban areas with large populations, particularly in counties with a higher prevalence of COVID-19 cases, were more likely to have reported cases." ¹

Mor: "If you're in an environment where there are a lot of people in the community who have COVID, the patients in the building are more likely to have COVID." ¹

"Outbreaks of COVID-19 in nursing homes are often a signal of the communities into which the virus is spreading." ⁴

ASYMPTOMATIC SPREAD AND AVAILABILITY OF TESTING WAS A KEY FACTOR

Grabowski: "It is spreading via asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases... We're not going to get a handle on COVID-19 until we get a systematic testing and surveillance system." ¹

"COVID-19's ability to hide in plain sight will continue to crush expectations of halting its spread unless more and quicker testing at nursing homes sweeps the country, said a top U.S. researcher (Mor)." ³

"Given asymptomatic spread and inadequate testing, staff often do not know which residents are infected. With policymakers and the public initially focused on the spread of infection within hospital settings, nursing homes often lost that competition." ⁴

QUALITY RATING OF FACILITY AND PREVIOUS CITATIONS WERE NOT A FACTOR IN OUTBREAKS

"COVID-19 cases in nursing homes are related to facility location and size and not traditional quality metrics such as star rating and prior infection control citations." ²

"He (Mor) added that counter to some assertions, regression analyses show that infection rates are unrelated to quality rankings..." ³

"We found no meaningful relationship between nursing home quality and the probability of at least one COVID-19 case or death... Indeed, the first death reported was from a nursing home in Washington State that had a 5-star rating." ⁴

Senator Susan Collins: "Testing should be conducted at all nursing homes, as Dr. Konetzka's research finds no correlation between CMS' quality ratings of nursing homes and the probability of at least one COVID-19 case. One of the worst outbreaks in Maine was at a nursing home that had five stars, the highest rating."⁵

NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FOR- OR NOT-FOR- PROFITS IN THE CHANCE OF AN OUTBREAK

"Characteristics that were not associated with a facility having a COVID case included... whether it was for-profit, part of a chain... These factors had no correlation with whether the facility had cases of COVID-19." ¹

N/A

"We found no significant differences in the probability of COVID-19 cases by profit status, with for-profit nursing homes and not-for-profit nursing homes being equally likely to have cases." ⁴

¹ [Provider Magazine](#), 5/11/20

² ["Characteristics Of U.S. Nursing Homes With COVID -19 Cases,"](#) 6/2/20

¹ [Provider Magazine](#), 5/11/20

³ [McKnight's Long Term Care News](#), 5/11/20

⁴ [Testimony](#) To United States Senate Special Committee On Aging, 5/21/20

⁵ [Op-ed](#), Senator Susan Collins, [The Portland Press Herald](#), 6/15/20