



## **CANCER DIAGNOSES DROP IN COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01am Monday 1 March 2021

AN estimated 2530 cancer diagnoses were delayed or missed during the COVID-19-related restrictions in Victoria, according to research published today by the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Using data from the Victorian Cancer Registry, researchers from Cancer Council Victoria, Monash University and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre examined the temporal relationship between COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria between 1 April and 15 October 2020 and cancer pathology notifications, to estimate their impact on cancer diagnoses.

"During 1 April – 15 October 2020, there were 5446 fewer pathology notifications than predicted by our primary model (predicted, 54 609 v observed, 49 163; relative reduction, –10.0%)," wrote the authors, led by Dr Luc te Marvelde, Head of Data Analytics at the Victorian Cancer Registry.

"We estimated that there were 2530 undiagnosed cancers. The relative reduction was greatest during 1 April – 4 May 2020.

"By tumour group, the relative reductions were most marked for prostate cancer, head and neck tumours, melanoma, and breast cancer; they were greater for men, people aged 50 years or more, and for people in areas of higher socio-economic position.

"Changes in care delivery during the restrictions, including suspension of screening services and outpatient clinics and postponed surveillance of existing cancers, may have affected notification numbers for some tumour groups and consequently the estimated number of delayed diagnoses."

Te Marvelde and colleagues warned that there may be a "possible surge in cancer diagnoses over the coming 6 to 12 months".

"Media campaigns encouraging people to not further delay seeking medical attention, may ameliorate any negative impact of delayed cancer diagnosis," they concluded.

All MJA media releases are open access and can be found at: <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/media>

**Please remember to credit *The MJA*.**

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

---

*The statements or opinions that are expressed in the MJA reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official policy of the AMA or the MJA unless that is so stated.*

CONTACTS:           Thea Cargill  
                          Cancer Council Victoria  
                          Email: [Thea.cargill@cancervic.org.au](mailto:Thea.cargill@cancervic.org.au)  
                          Ph: 0429 000 450