

Letters

Editor's Note

Regardless of Age, Obesity and Hypertension Increase Risks With COVID-19

Older age has consistently been associated with higher mortality in patients with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).^{1,2} Unfortunately, as shown by Cunningham et al³ in this issue of *JAMA Internal Medicine*, COVID-19 does not spare young people. Using a national all-payer hospital database, the investigators identified 3222 nonpregnant adults aged 18 to 34 years who were admitted to US hospitals for COVID-19. Morbidity was substantial: 21% required intensive care, and 2.7% died. Mortality was higher among those who had obesity, hypertension, and male sex, as has been noted in general adult populations.

Combined with what we know about the greater risk of older persons, what does this study tell us about COVID-19 and young adults? First, while young adults are much less likely than older persons to become seriously ill, if they reach the point of hospitalization, their risks are substantial. Second, obesity, hypertension, and male sex put patients of all ages at greater risk. As obesity and hypertension are preventable and treatable conditions, reducing the risk of serious COVID-19 illness should be added to the already long list of reasons to increase medical and

public health efforts in young adults to promote healthful diets and increased exercise. Finally, the article by Cunningham et al³ establishes that COVID-19 is a life-threatening disease in people of all ages and that social distancing, facial coverings, and other approaches to prevent transmission are as important in young adults as in older persons.

Mitchell H. Katz, MD

Author Affiliations: NYC Health and Hospitals, New York (Katz); Deputy Editor, *JAMA Internal Medicine* (Katz).

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Corresponding Author: Mitchell Katz, MD, NYC Health and Hospitals, 125 Worth St, Room 514, New York, NY 10013 (mitchell.katz@nychhc.org).

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