

Title: Have women with chronic diseases been more negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic than men ? Results from the iCARE Study

Authors: *Frédérique Deslauriers, BsC (Université du Québec à Montréal), Simon Bacon, PhD (Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal, Concordia University), Kim Lavoie, PhD (Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal, UQAM).

Background: COVID-19 has taken a toll on Canadians, and certain subgroups may be particularly vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic, including those with non-communicable disease (NCDs; e.g., heart and lung disease) due to their risk of COVID-19 complications.

Objective: To assess the difference of COVID-19 impacts according to sex and health condition.

Methods: This study assessed multidimensional impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians with vs without NCDs (e.g., mental health, access to medical care) and assessed the extent of any sex differences. As part of the iCARE study (www.icarestudy.com), data from 4 representative samples of 3000 Canadians collected between June 4, 2020 to March 23, 2021 was analyzed using general linear models.

Results: Analyses indicated that, compared to those without NCDs (N=6255), individuals with a NCD (N=5285) were more likely to have cancelled medical appointments or avoided presenting to the ER (18% vs 12%), had more difficulty accessing medical care (13% vs 8%), and had higher levels of mental stress (22% and 21% reported extreme anxiety and feeling depressed) ($p's < .05$). Women with NCDs reported higher levels of mental stress compared to men (28% vs 16% reported anxiety) and cancelled more medical appointments (21% vs 15%) ($p's < .05$).

Conclusion: Findings suggest that women with NCDs have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and should be targeted for intervention.