

## GAPS IN CARE: IMPACT OF DELAYED CARE DUE TO COVID-19

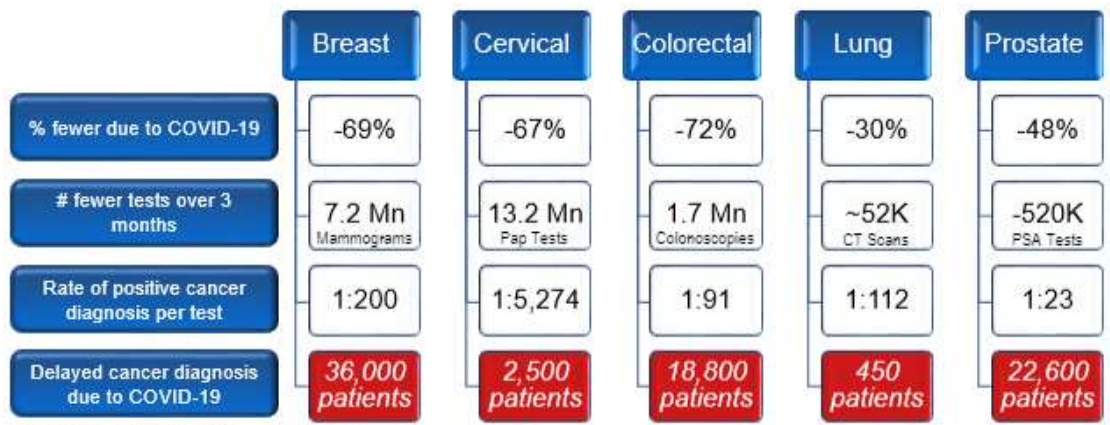
Between March 16 and April 30, hospitals throughout the United States paused elective and non-emergent exams and procedures in order to preserve capacity in the event of a surge in COVID-19 hospitalizations. The result of this action was a nationwide decline in medical services, including a 74% decline in urgent care visits, a 92% decline in inpatient stays and an 83% decline in lab tests.

The suspension of non-emergent care has raised concerns about gaps in care due to missed or delayed diagnoses, and the reduction in follow-up visits. Additional gaps in care could also increase with unemployment as people either lose insurance or have less money for out-of-pocket costs. Unemployment in Wisconsin has quadrupled from March, increasing from 3% in March to 12% in May.

*Delayed cancer diagnoses can allow cancers to advance, making successful treatments less likely.*

*Health care capacity to provide “catch-up” exams would require providers to shift priorities to make space in existing scheduling and could disrupt social distancing efforts.*

**Modeled Impact of Reduced Screening Tests Three Months Ending June 5, 2020**



**Over 22 million screening tests and over 80,000 positive cancer diagnosis have been potentially delayed**

### Looking Ahead:

Health care systems are seeing an increase in patients returning for routine exams and elective procedures, but it could take a year before providers will see “normal” levels of care delivery. Some patients may postpone routine exams until next year due to the loss of their job and/or health insurance or the fear of contracting COVID-19.

Both provider capacity and patients’ willingness to re-engage in in-person health care over the next few months will determine the impact that gaps in care will have on health care diagnoses and expenses. Employers should consider urging and/or incenting plan members to make up missed visits, especially if they have chronic conditions or are concerned, they may have a health issue that has not been diagnosed.

### Sources:

IQVIA Institute: “Shifts in Healthcare Demand, Delivery and Care During the COVID-19 Era”, April 2020

FierceHealthCare: “Moody’s: Patient Volume recovered a bit in May, but providers face a long road to recovery”, June 22, 2020

Infection Control Today, “CDC Recommends Resumption of non-COVID Related Elective Procedures”, May 21, 2020

US BLS Economy at a Glance: <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.wi.htm>