

More Than 40% of Medicare Beneficiaries in Nursing Homes May Have Developed COVID-19 in 2020

Richard P. Kusserow | July 1, 2021

OIG report confirms COVID-19's devastating impact on Medicare beneficiaries in nursing homes.

A [study](#) of Medicare claims data by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that two in five Medicare beneficiaries residing in nursing homes were diagnosed with either COVID-19 or “likely COVID-19” in 2020. Almost 1,000 more beneficiaries died per day in April 2020 than in April 2019. Overall mortality in nursing homes increased from 17 percent in 2019 to more than 22 percent in 2020, with each month in 2020 having a higher mortality rate than the same month in 2019.

The OIG conducted the study to address the absence of COVID-19 diagnosis data on nursing home residents. This type of data has not been readily available, in part because nursing homes are not required to report cases and deaths that occurred prior to May 8th, 2020.

The [complete report](#) notes that understanding the pandemic's effects on nursing home residents may help prevent future tragedies. The results demonstrate the need for increased action to mitigate the effects of the ongoing pandemic and better prepare for future public health emergencies. The OIG will conduct additional work to study the strategies used by nursing homes to confront the challenges of the pandemic.

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