

# SCAI consumer survey comparing fear of COVID-19 versus heart attack or stroke (first publish date: September 4, 2020)

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All of us are aware and concerned about the enormous decline in patients seeking care for serious cardiovascular conditions. Accordingly, in May 2020, the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography & Interventions (SCAI) conducted a national survey to determine American's fears and concerns surrounding coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) when experiencing a medical emergency such as heart attack or stroke. The online survey included 1,068 respondents from a nationally representative sample of people aged 30 and older. The confidence level for the survey was 95% with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.06$ .

The quantitative study contained 17 multiple-choice questions. Six questions were used for demographics consisting of age, gender, ethnicity, state of residency, prior heart attack, and prior stroke; while 11 questions looked for insights regarding fears and perceptions related to seeking treatment for heart attack symptoms.

## 1 | FEAR OF COVID-19 IS KEEPING PATIENTS OUT OF THE HOSPITAL

- Fear of contracting COVID-19 in a hospital is a barrier to seeking care even when faced with a serious medical emergency like heart attack or stroke:
  - About 61% of respondents think they are either somewhat likely or very likely to acquire COVID-19 in a hospital
  - Half of respondents are *more afraid of contracting COVID-19* than experiencing a heart attack or stroke
  - More than half (57%) of respondents say that fear of contracting COVID-19 could keep them from seeking medical attention in a hospital, even for urgent medical issues, like heart attack symptoms
  - When asked which are you more afraid of, contracting COVID-19, experiencing a heart attack or experiencing a stroke—twice as many people over the age of 60 are more afraid of

contracting COVID-19 (52%) than they are of experiencing a heart attack (23%) or stroke (25%)

- More than one-third of Americans (36%) consider going to the hospital to be one of the riskiest behaviors to take part in compared to going to a hair salon (27%) or going to the beach (16%)
- About 89% of respondents said they would need one or more of the following to feel that it is safe to go to the hospital in the next 6 months:
  - Know that enough personal protective equipment is available to healthcare workers and patients
  - Know COVID-19 cases are treated in separate units with separate doctors
  - See a decrease in COVID-19 cases in their area
  - A vaccine is available for COVID-19

There was also a gap between what Americans say, and actual behaviors. Most respondents (88%) said they would call “911” or visit a hospital if experiencing symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, however, this runs counter to what doctors are experiencing in hospitals. Although we are beginning to see STEMI cases return to the hospital, there is still a need for greater awareness of the safety and preparedness of hospitals to handle non-COVID-19 related health emergencies.

Regarding limitations, the study only included participants in the United States, therefore, the results may not be transferable to other populations due to varying cultural differences. This study was distributed online and consequently, it may not be representative of people who do not have an internet connection.

The results from the survey profoundly displayed that Americans need to be reassured that proper precautions and protocols are in place to keep them safe from COVID-19 and make them feel comfortable to go into the hospital and visit their doctors. Therefore, we initiated the SCAI Seconds *Still* Count patient awareness campaign to educate people that even in this COVID-19 environment, seconds still count when it comes to their heart health. The campaign has aimed to

reach at-risk individuals and families while they watch local news, connect on social media and stream entertainment with the message that time to treatment is still the best way to secure the best possible outcome after a heart attack or stroke. We also developed a hospital toolkit complete with infographics, social media content, fact sheets, and other turnkey communications. As a SCAI member, you have a unique opportunity to join us in this effort. You can help by spreading the word to your patients, colleagues, and broader hospital community to ensure this important message reaches those who need to hear it most. Please encourage your patients to learn more by visiting [www.secondscount.org](http://www.secondscount.org).

Additionally, the SCAI Publications Committee and several working groups have come together to develop a myriad of resources for our members providing societal recommendations for your protection, care for acute myocardial infarction (AMI) patients, as well as access to surveys, registries, and timely news. This information and more can be accessed in the SCAI COVID-19 Resource Center on the new SCAI

website. This fall, SCAI will also launch a webinar series which will continue the conversation around how we can best serve our patients and develop a strategic, consistent approach to cardiovascular care across health systems.

While these are still very much uncertain times, I rest assured knowing that through timeliness, collaboration, and the shared vision of enhancing care for our patients, we will get through this together. If you have suggestions of how SCAI can help combat cardiovascular disease and patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic, please reach out to me at [president@scai.org](mailto:president@scai.org). I would love to hear from you.

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