

350,000 referrals for cancer patients missed since March



by Dominic Yeatman

Published October 19, 2020

THE number of people dying at home from illnesses other than Covid-19 has rocketed since lockdown.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics for March to September reveal that almost 1,000 deaths are being recorded every week — up 26,000 on the same period last year.

Among the biggest killers are diabetes (up 86 per cent), Parkinson's (79 per cent), prostate cancer (53 per cent), breast cancer (47 per cent) and bowel cancer (46 per cent). Deaths among women with dementia have jumped 75 per cent. Prof Karol Sikora, director of cancer care provider Rutherford Health, said it was time to ask 'difficult questions to avoid even more unnecessary deaths'. The leading oncologist added: 'Covid-19 kills... but so does lockdown.'

Fiona Carragher, of the Alzheimer's Society and former deputy chief scientific officer of NHS England, blamed the 'dreadful side-effects of

with dementia dying, we saw it in care homes and now we're seeing the impact in the community.'

Another 80 coronavirus deaths were recorded yesterday, alongside 18,804 new cases — up from 16,982 on Sunday.

The ONS figures reveal there were 27million fewer GP appointments between March and August than in the same period last year.

Covid-19 is now the seventh-leading cause of deaths at home for men, and 11th for women. Eighty per cent of fatalities are among people over 70, and heart disease is the biggest killer claiming 12,029 lives in the period — 2,343 more than normal.

'Most of these deaths would normally have occurred in hospital, and people have either been reluctant to go, discouraged from attending or the services have been disrupted,' said Prof David Spiegelhalter, of the University of Cambridge. 'It is unclear how many of these lives could have been extended had they gone to hospital.'

Cancer Research UK has calculated that 350,000 referrals have been missed since March. And charities have warned that thousands of terminally ill people are missing out on care.

'Access to high quality end-of-life care is crucial,' said Adrienne Betteley, of Macmillan Cancer Support.

'Unfortunately, we are seeing unprecedented demand for end of life care in private homes at a time when teams are already stretched.'

Mike Brookes, 78, from Rochdale, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's during lockdown and needs heart surgery. 'He's deteriorated massively over the period,' said wife Liz, 64, who is also his carer. 'Although they say there's no coronavirus in the hospital, how can you be sure?'

Meanwhile, latest government figures show there were 5,402 Covid-19 patients in hospital in England on Monday, up from 3,665 a week ago, while 528 were in ventilation beds, up from 426 seven days earlier.



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