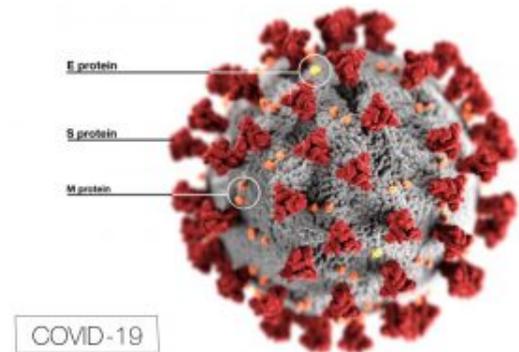


Researchers Examine the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Timely TBD Diagnosis



This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reveals ultrastructural morphology exhibited by coronaviruses. (Photo Credit: Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAMS)

A study published in the journal *Diagnostic Microbiology and Infectious Disease* addresses the observed negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the timely diagnosis of tick-borne infections (TBD) in three adult patients.

The researchers examined the ways that various precautionary measures, which have been set in place to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, can also have indirect health effects on patients who have been infected with TBD. This situation may potentially result in the failure to properly diagnose TBD infections.

Changes Due to COVID-19 Precautions

Factors such as reduced outpatient visits, the need for patients to demonstrate negative COVID-19 test results (prior to undergoing certain medical procedures), and the increase in the telemedicine format for conducting appointments, were identified as leading to potentially harmful outcomes for patients who are infected with TBD. In one of the cases, failure to diagnose *erythema migrans* during a telemedicine appointment “is believed to have played a significant role” in the patient developing severe cardiac Lyme disease resulting in a six-day hospital stay due to heart block.

Thorough Testing is Advised

Calling attention to the need for providers and patients to be aware of potential adverse outcomes of only performing COVID-19 tests, which may delay a more thorough patient evaluation, the researchers argue that all appropriate testing should be done at the same time, not only after a COVID-19 diagnosis is excluded. Taking steps to more comprehensive testing at the onset of patient care may help to lessen the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on timely TBD diagnosis.

Read the study, “Negative Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Timely Diagnosis of Tick-Borne Infections” in *Diagnostic Microbiology and Infectious Disease*.

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