

COVID-19 AT WOLISSO HOSPITAL, ETHIOPIA

Once again we are seeing one of the most critical secondary effects of health crises like the current pandemic: a drop in outpatient visits and hospitalizations. However, use of assisted deliveries and other emergency services continues more or less unabated. Here’s what the situation looks like in Wolisso, Ethiopia.

TEXT BY / FABIO MANENTI / DOCTORS WITH AFRICA CUAMM

The first confirmed case of Covid-19 in Ethiopia was recorded on 14 March 2020. The virus then spread quite slowly, for a total of 1,063 cases by the end of May. Starting in June, though, the number began to climb rapidly, reaching 5,575 on 25 June. Ethiopia was quick to put in place containment measures such as the closure of schools and restrictions on travel between regions. Thus far no confirmed cases have been found in the Wolisso area; on 13 March a 27-year-old woman was hospitalized with Covid-19-like symptoms, but she recovered and tested negative. Since then, all patients have been screened upon entering the hospital, their temperatures taken and questions asked about possible contacts, and those with possible cases of Covid-19 are isolated in a separate facility outside. Concerns about possible spread of the disease to the Wolisso area initially led to a steep decrease in both outpatient visits and hospitalizations. The average 315 outpatient visits/day in the first

13 days of March fell to an average 205/day through 31 March, then dropped further, to an average 119/day, from 1 to 22 April, i.e., a 62% drop between the first and last period. Even so, as the figure shows, the trend started to turn around in early April, with the numbers slowly climbing back up. In terms of hospitalizations, there was a 44% drop from 1 to 13 March and from 1 to 22 April, while the drop was much smaller vis-à-vis deliveries, which fell from an average of 12.8 per day to 11.9 per day in the same two time periods. Overall, comparing the first five months of 2019 with the same period in 2020, we found a 13% drop in outpatient visits and 7% in hospitalizations. While apprehension about the virus and restrictions on people's movement in Ethiopia led to a significant drop in the number of outpatient visits, at least in that first month, essential and urgent services such as deliveries were not seriously affected.

FIGURE 1 / OUTPATIENT VISIT TREND, 1 MARCH - 22 APRIL

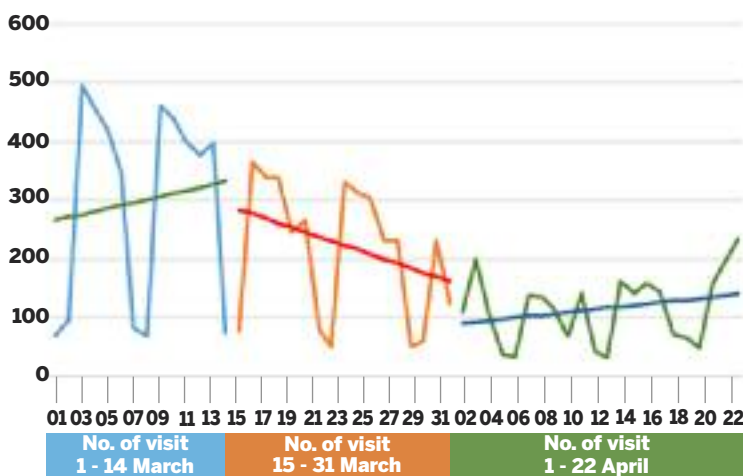
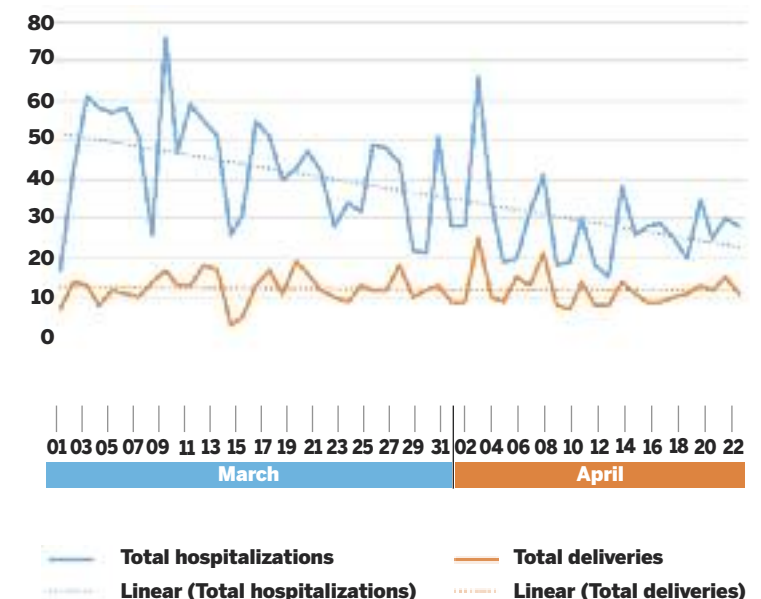


FIGURE 2 / TOTAL HOSPITALIZATION AND DELIVERY TREND, 1 MARCH - 22 APRIL



— Total hospitalizations — Total deliveries
 Linear (Total hospitalizations) Linear (Total deliveries)