

# U.S. Army Veteran Dies of Treatable Illness After Being Unable to Get ICU Bed Due to Pandemic Shortages

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August 27, 2021 10:11 PM

Appeared in **People.com**

*Preface: this is an all too real example of the 'ripple effect' or collateral damage from the rapid spread of COVID-19 delta variant that is occurring in **unvaccinated** people. Hospital ICUs in low-vaccinated regions (particularly the Southwest US) are filled to maximum capacity with primarily COVID patients.*

*This means that people that require intensive care, e.g. heart attacks, trauma, severe non-COVID infections, children and infants needing surgery for congenital heart/lung abnormalities, transplant patients, etc....are all at profound risk for adverse outcomes (including death) as their care is forced to be delayed. This case is an unfortunate perfect example.DZ*

U.S. Army veteran Daniel Wilkinson needed an ICU bed to save his life.

Last Saturday, Wilkinson's mother, Michelle Puget, rushed him to a hospital in Bellville, Texas, after he started feeling sick. His symptoms weren't related to COVID-19. In fact, his illness was very treatable.

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Dr. Hasan Kakli, an emergency physician at Belville Medical Center, diagnosed the veteran with gallstone pancreatitis.

"If that stone doesn't spontaneously come out and doesn't resolve itself, that fluid just builds up, backs up into the liver, backs up into the pancreas, and starts to shut down those organs," Kakli told CBS News. "His bloodwork even showed that his kidneys were shutting down."

The medical center wasn't equipped to treat Wilkinson. The veteran who served two tours needed to be transferred to another hospital to have the procedure to remove the stone.

Unfortunately, due to a rise in severe COVID-19 patients in ICU beds across the entire Southern U.S., there wasn't a spot available for Wilkinson, the news outlet reported. Kakli spent the next seven hours trying to find a medical center across the South that could treat Wilkinson, but to no avail.

"I had that thought in my head: 'I need to get his mother here right now. I said, 'If he doesn't get this procedure done, he is going to die,' " Kakli said. "I also had to have the discussion with him. 'Dan,' I said, 'if your heart stops in front of me right here, what do you want me to do? Do you want me to do everything we can to resuscitate you and try and get your heart back? If that were to happen, Dan, if I were to get you back, we're still in that position we're in right now.' "

Finally, a hospital bed opened up in Houston. Wilkinson was airlifted to the nearby hospital, but it was too late to save his life.

"They weren't able to do the procedure on him because it had been too long," Puget told CBS News. "[They] told me that they had seen air pockets in his intestines, which means that they were already starting to die off. They told me that I had to make a decision, and I knew how Danny felt; he didn't want to be that way. And, so, we were all in agreement that we had to let him go."

Wilkinson died on Aug. 20 at 46 years old from an illness that Kakli told CBS News should have been treated within 30 minutes.

"I've never lost a patient from this diagnosis, ever," Kakli said. "I'm scared that the next patient that I see is someone that I can't get to where they need to get to go. We are playing musical chairs, with 100 people and 10 chairs. When the music stops, what happens? People from all over the world come to Houston to get medical care and, right now, Houston can't take care of patients from the next town over. That's the reality."

His heartbroken mother shared the news of her son's death on Wilkson's Facebook Page.

"My wonderful son Daniel Wilkinson took his last breath today a 1:37pm," Puget wrote. "Danny went peacefully with no pain. If he was able to recover he would be a vegetable and he did not want that. After all he went through in Afghanistan a little gall stone took him out. He loved each and every one of you."

A Facebook Fundraiser has been set up to help the family with funeral costs.

As of Friday, Harris County, Texas, reported an estimated 54,000 active cases of COVID-19. About 2.2 million people out of the county's population of 4.7 million are fully vaccinated.

Currently, over 36% of ICU beds in Harris County are being filled by COVID-19 patients, according to county health data.

***As information about the coronavirus pandemic rapidly changes, PEOPLE is committed to providing the most recent data in our coverage. Some of the information in this story may have changed after publication. For the latest on COVID-19, readers are encouraged to use online resources from the CDC, WHO and local public health departments.***

# Becker's Hospital Review

August 30, 2021

## US COVID deaths hit 6-month high & 7 other updates

COVID-19 deaths have risen to an average of more than **1,000 a day** for the first time since March, according to an Aug. 27 *Times* [update](#). In Florida, the average number of daily virus deaths is currently higher than at any other point in the pandemic.

Seven other updates:

1. The U.S. is seeing a seven-day average of more than **100,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations per day**, the [second highest surge](#) next to last winter's, the *Times* reported.
2. U.S. virus hospitalizations have risen nearly **500 percent in the last two months**.
3. One in five U.S. intensive care units reached or surpassed 95 percent capacity in August. Though the crisis is concentrated mostly in the South — with Alabama one of the first states to hit capacity — small pockets of high occupancy are scattered across the nation.
4. In Florida, 16,457 people are hospitalized with COVID-19, the highest number of any state, followed by Texas, according to HHS data cited by the *Times*.
5. New daily COVID-19 hospitalization rates in the U.S. have [increased](#) 24 percent over the last two weeks, with 46 states and the District of Columbia seeing hospitalization rates trend upward, according to Aug. 30 data tracked by the *Times*.
6. Nationwide, new daily cases aren't rising as quickly as they were earlier this month. Some areas first hit by summer surges, such as Louisiana and Missouri, have reported sustained declines over the last few weeks.
7. **The average number of vaccines administered per day has risen steadily this month, from about 816,000 shots Aug. 1 to more than 878,000 doses Aug. 27.**

## COVID-19 symptoms can last 1 year, study in China suggests

August 27, 2021

A year after being hospitalized for COVID-19, **nearly half of patients** still had at least one lingering symptom, a study published Aug. 26 in *The Lancet* found.

The study included 1,276 patients discharged from a hospital in Wuhan, China, between Jan. 7 and May 29, 2020. Researchers followed up with patients after six and 12 months to assess their symptoms and quality of life. The median age of patients was 57, and most did not require intensive care during their hospitalization.

Five things to know:

1. Researchers found **49 percent** of patients **still had at least one lingering COVID-19 symptom after 12 months**, down from 68 percent after six months.
2. The most common long-term symptom was **fatigue** or **muscle weakness**, which fell from 52 percent at six months to 20 percent at 12 months.
3. Patients were slightly more likely to report difficulty breathing and anxiety or depression at the 12-month mark.
4. **Women were more likely than men** to have fatigue or muscle weakness, mental health issues or lung function problems after 12 months.
5. The study is believed to be the largest to date to assess the lingering effects of the virus on survivors after one year, researchers said.

### **States ranked by COVID-19 hospitalization rates: Aug. 30**

New daily COVID-19 hospitalization rates in the U.S. have increased 24 percent over the last two weeks, with 46 states and the District of Columbia seeing hospitalization rates trend upward, according to data tracked by *The New York Times*.

Data is taken from HHS and was last updated Aug. 30. States are listed in order of hospitalization rate percent increase over the last two weeks.

**North Carolina** ranks **17<sup>th</sup> highest** in the country for increased hospitalizations, and ranks **15<sup>th</sup> highest** for number of hospitalizations per 100,000 people.

North Carolina

14-day change: **45 percent increase**

Hospitalizations per 100,000 people: **31**

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***Remember.....the single most effective means to end the pandemic is for everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated.***

***While vaccinated people can get infected and potentially infect others, their infection rate is lower than that of unvaccinated people, and..... the period of time that a vaccinated person may be able to pass on the infection is much shorter.***

***The continued appearance of variants (which occurs randomly as the virus replicates itself) can only occur in an infected host. That is...the longer and more severely a person is infected, the greater the chance the virus has to mutate into a new and potentially more lethal variant.***

***Please, if you haven't already, get the vaccine. Without complete participation, the pandemic will not end in the near future. Dr. Z***