

Cuomo report on nursing-home deaths related to COVID-19 ripped by experts

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An internal New York state study that let Gov. Cuomo's administration **off the hook** for making nursing homes admit coronavirus patients came under withering attack from scientists and medical experts on Tuesday.

"They really need to own the fact that they made a mistake, that it was never right to send COVID patients into nursing homes and that people died because of it," Dr. Michael Wasserman, president of the California Association of Long Term Care Medicine, told the Associated Press.

Catherine Troisi, an epidemiologist with the The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, said the state Department of Health report released earlier this month was riddled with holes, including data on nursing homes that were free of the deadly disease before being forced to admit infected patients.

"Would this get published in an academic journal? No," Troisi said.

Denis Nash, an epidemiologist at the City University of New York School of Public Health, noted that the state's official nursing-home death toll doesn't include residents who died at hospitals — calling it a "potentially huge problem" that reduced the total number of fatalities and could "introduce bias into the analysis."



A senior center in Huntington, NY
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DOH figures on Tuesday showed 6,312 nursing-home deaths, slightly more than 25 percent of the state's total 24,994 coronavirus fatalities.

Assemblyman Ron Kim (D-Queens) called the DOH report "a whitewash and coverup" and "a case of Cuomo trying to get ahead of the storm coming his way" when the Legislature holds a pair of joint hearings on the subject next month.

Bill Hammond, director of health policy at the Empire Center for Public Policy, also said that "there's really no excuse for not giving the honest picture of what happened in nursing homes, especially in the context of what's supposed to be a rigorous study."

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A campaign spokesman for President Trump said that Cuomo — who on Monday claimed that Trump's handling of the pandemic was worse than Watergate — "tragically devastated the senior population in New York and no amount [of] revisionist history can erase the governor's grossly incompetent decisions."

In the DOH report, released July 6, the department said infected staffers and possibly visitors had inadvertently spread the virus in nursing homes while absolving itself of any blame over its since-abandoned mandate.

New York Department of Health spokesman Gary Holmes said the study was intended to "measure the strength of the variables," adding: "The strongest factor in driving the nursing-home infections was through staff infections."