

HEALTH CARE

Warnings of overrun hospitals put nursing homes at risk, health official says

“There needs to be some accountability for all of these people that were making these fantastic estimates,” Mark Parkinson said.



A nursing home is closed to visitors in Windsor, Conn. | Chris Ehrmann/AP Photo

By **ELEANOR MUELLER**

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Warnings of overrun hospitals were "an error" that resulted in the spread of coronavirus in nursing homes, and those who issued them should face "some accountability," AHCA President and CEO Mark Parkinson said Sunday.

"The country was too concerned with hospitals being overrun, and there were consequences to that," Parkinson, a former Kansas governor and the current president and CEO of the American Health Care Association, told Chris Wallace on "Fox News Sunday." "One of the consequences is that nursing homes were left out. Our residents weren't a high priority for testing. We weren't given the equipment that we needed."

The AHCA is an association of providers of long-term care and post-acute care.

"There needs to be some accountability for all of these people that were making these fantastic estimates that the entire hospital system across the country was going to be overrun. It wasn't, and there are consequences and, unfortunately, nursing home residents are one of the consequences," he said.

Nursing homes have [struggled to obtain protective gear](#), even as they emerged as deadly hot spots. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is coordinating shipments of surgical masks, gloves, eye protection and gowns to more than 15,400 facilities, [the agency announced last month](#).

Asked about New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's decision in March to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance to [direct nursing homes not to turn away Covid-19 patients](#), Parkinson called the prediction that hospitals would be overrun "an error."

Cuomo "was being told by the epidemiologist that his hospitals were going to be overrun with Covid patients," Parkinson said. "In hindsight, we now know that that was not the case. There was actually the capacity there; they didn't need to be discharged to nursing homes. In hindsight, it was an error, and to Governor Cuomo's credit, he has now reversed that policy."

"Fortunately, we were able to convince most of the other governors across the country to not institute that policy, and I think that's part of the reason we're starting to see recovery."

More than 2,300 New York nursing home and assisted facility residents have died from Covid-19, with an additional 2,500-plus presumed to have died from the virus, according to [state Department of Health county-level data](#). There have been high tolls in other states as well.

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