INTRODUCTION
COVID-19 continues to disrupt US health care, leading to care delays. Older adults, who have higher levels of functional impairment and comorbidity, may be particularly sensitive to delayed or unmet care. Analyses of pandemic-related delayed care have not focused on older adults nor examined factors associated with delays, critical information to plan for the future.

METHODS
The 2020 National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS; conducted May–October by phone, response rate=94.7%) is a nationally representative survey of Medicare beneficiaries ≥70 years. A COVID-19 supplement was also fielded from June–December 2020 (by mail, response rate=82.2%). This analysis includes all COVID-19 supplement respondents (n=3257).

Respondents were asked: “During the COVID-19 outbreak, has there ever been a time when you needed or had planned to see a doctor or other health care provider but put off getting care?” We examined type of and reason for delayed care among those who endorsed delay.

Other respondent characteristics included demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity), socioeconomic status (marital status, education, Medicaid enrollment, living alone, residential setting), health and functional status, and self-reported comorbidities (heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, stroke, cancer, arthritis, hypertension, dementia, depression, anxiety).

COVID-19-related variables included whether the respondent or others in their household or facility had COVID-19 symptoms, diagnosis, or positive test; COVID-19 was still affecting daily life in the respondent’s state; respondents moved to another place or someone else moved in; and having family or friend caregiver during the pandemic.

We used adjusted logistic regression to examine factors associated with delayed care and calculated the mean predicted probability of delayed care for each characteristic, holding all others constant. We used NHATS analytic weights to generate nationally representative estimates. Statistical significance was set a two-tailed p<.05. Analyses were performed using STATA, version 15.1.

RESULTS
Among 3257 respondents ≥70 years (representing 32.7 million older adults), 38.0% reported delayed care (Fig. 1), including 20.2% from a dentist; 18.6%, usual doctor; 15.6%, specialist; 15.2%, vision or hearing; 2.8%, surgery; 1.4%, medications; 0.9%, emergency or urgent care; and 6.1%, other (including physical therapy, mental health, or test/lab). The most common reason for delayed care was “the provider cancelled, closed, or suggested rescheduling” (55.5%), followed by “I decided it could wait” or “a family member did not want me to go” (53.9%), “I was afraid to go” (28.1%), or “I could not get an appointment” (10.8%).

The probability of delayed care was higher among females (42.1% vs. 33.0%, p<.001; Table 1) and respondents with at least some college (42.8% vs. 30.6%, p<.001); it did not vary by race/ethnicity or Medicaid enrollment. Those with fair or poor general health reported a higher probability of delayed care (e.g., 41.5% vs. 34.7% [very good or excellent health], p=.03); the probability did not vary by functional status.

All COVID-19-related variables were associated with delayed care. The characteristic associated with the highest probability of delayed care was COVID-19 in a respondent’s household or facility (56.2% vs. 37.3%, p=.006), while those with a family or friend caregiver during the pandemic also had a higher probability of delayed care (41.3% vs. 33.9%, p=.002).

DISCUSSION
Nearly 40% of older Americans reported delaying health care during the COVID-19 pandemic, with supply (e.g., provider cancelled) and demand (e.g., respondent decided to delay) factors each reported by over half of respondents with delays. Dental and usual doctor care were most commonly delayed, consistent with findings from nonelderly adults and estimates from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Delays
Figure 1. Prevalence of delayed care in a nationally representative sample of Americans aged 70 years or older during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were weighted using the survey analytic weights. We calculated proportions of respondents who reported any delayed care and each type of care delayed among all Americans aged 70 years or older. Respondents may report more than one type of delayed care (e.g., usual doctor and specialist appointments). “Other” included services such as physical therapy, mental health, or test/lab.

Table 1. Factors Associated with Delayed Care Among Americans Aged 70 Years or Older During the COVID-19 Pandemic

|                                | All respondents, % (n=3257) | Delayed care | Adjusted probability, % (95% CI)† | p-value |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------|
|                                | National estimate           | 32,686,642   | 12,433,906                        |         |
| Sex                            | Male                        | 44.1         | 34.1                              | <.001   |
|                                | Female                      | 55.9         | 41.2                              |         |
| Age                            | 70–74                       | 35.4         | 41.8                              | .03     |
|                                | 75–84                       | 46.9         | 36.4                              | .09     |
|                                | 85+                         | 17.7         | 34.8                              | .09     |
| Race/ethnicity                 | Non-Hispanic White          | 78.6         | 38.9                              | .48     |
|                                | Non-Hispanic Black          | 7.8          | 32.1                              | .30     |
|                                | Hispanic                    | 7.4          | 35.9                              | .91     |
|                                | Other                       | 6.2          | 36.9                              | .98     |
| Married                        | No                          | 45.8         | 36.9                              | .43     |
|                                | Yes                         | 54.2         | 39.0                              |         |
| Some college or above          | No                          | 39.2         | 29.9                              | <.001   |
|                                | Yes                         | 60.8         | 43.3                              |         |
| Medicaid enrolled              | No                          | 87.8         | 38.8                              | .84     |
|                                | Yes                         | 12.2         | 32.8                              |         |
| Living alone                   | No                          | 68.4         | 38.1                              | .99     |
|                                | Yes                         | 31.6         | 38.0                              |         |
| Residential setting            | Community                   | 93.6         | 37.9                              | .12     |
|                                | Independent living          | 3.0          | 50.2                              | .46     |
|                                | Assisted living             | 2.0          | 28.6                              | .06     |
|                                | Nursing home                | 1.4          | 35.4                              | .07     |
| General health status          | Very good or excellent      | 44.6         | 35.8                              | .21     |
|                                | Good                        | 36.3         | 39.9                              | .03     |
|                                | Fair or poor                | 19.1         | 39.8                              | .03     |
| Any activities of daily living impairment‡ | No                                 | 64.7         | 37.9                              | .82     |
|                                | Yes                         | 35.3         | 38.4                              | .82     |
| Any instrumental activities of daily living impairment§ | No                                 | 60.6         | 37.3                              | .39     |
|                                | Yes                         | 39.4         | 39.2                              | .73     |

(continued on next page)
of such services highlight the contribution of both demand- (e.g., respondents perceive routine services as delayable) and supply-related (e.g., state orders to postpone elective care, potentially including dental and usual doctor visits) factors.

These findings also underscore the impact of COVID-19-related household disruptions, with household COVID increasing the likelihood of delayed care by the largest margin of all characteristics. Other pandemic household changes (e.g., respondent moving or someone moving in with the respondent) were also associated with delay. Finally, caregiving dyads appeared to be at particular risk: While a prior analysis demonstrated unpaid caregivers delayed their own care due to COVID, respondents in this analysis with family or friend caregiver during COVID-19 demonstrated unpaid caregivers delayed their own care due to COVID-19 still affecting daily life in the state

| COVID-19 symptoms, diagnosis, or positive test of respondent | All respondents, % (n=3257) | Delayed care | Unadjusted proportion, % a (n=1187) | p-value | Adjusted probability, % (95% CI) b | p-value |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|
| No                                                            | 94.4                       | 37.4         | .03                               | 37.7    | (35.3–40.2)                     | .03     |
| Yes                                                           | 5.6                        | 48.8         |                                   | 43.4    | (33.5–53.3)                     | .28     |
| COVID-19 symptoms, diagnosis, or positive test of other persons in the household or facility | No | 95.8 | 37.2 | <.001 | 37.3 | (34.9–39.6) | .006 |
| Yes | 4.2 | 56.9 |       |                                   | 56.2    | (43.4–69.1)                     |         |
| COVID-19 still affecting daily life in the state | No | 7.3 | 24.9 | .003 | 28.6 | (21.0–36.3) | .02  |
| Yes | 93.0 | 39.1 |       |                                   | 38.7    | (36.2–41.3)                     |         |
| Moved to another place during COVID-19 | No | 93.0 | 37.3 | .005 | 37.5 | (35.1–40.0) | .05  |
| Yes | 6.1 | 50.0 |       |                                   | 46.0    | (38.6–53.4)                     |         |
| Someone else moved in during COVID-19 | No | 93.0 | 37.3 | .003 | 37.3 | (35.0–39.6) | .02  |
| Yes | 6.0 | 52.8 |       |                                   | 49.1    | (39.1–59.2)                     |         |
| Having family or friend caregiver during COVID-19 | No | 44.0 | 32.5 | <.001 | 33.9 | (30.2–37.5) | .002 |
| Yes | 55.0 | 42.4 |       |                                   | 41.3    | (38.5–45.1)                     |         |

Data from the 2020 National Health and Aging Trends Study and associated COVID-19 supplement. Data were weighted using the survey analytic weights, which accounted for differential probabilities of selection and non-response; and standard errors were adjusted to account for the complex survey design.

p-values are adjusted for other characteristics in the corresponding analyses.

Activities of daily living included getting out of bed, getting around one’s home or building, bathing, dressing, eating, and toileting.

Instrumental activities of daily living included doing laundry, going shopping, preparing meals, handling banking, and managing medications.

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Lianlian Lei, PhD
Donovan T. Maust, MD, MS

1Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Rachel Upjohn Building, 4250, Road Ann Arbor, Plymouth, MI 48109, USA
2Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
3Center for Clinical Management Research, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Corresponding Author: Lianlian Lei, PhD; Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Rachel Upjohn Building, 4250, Road Ann Arbor, Plymouth, MI 48109, USA (e-mail: leilian@med.umich.edu).

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Declarations:
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