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A recent study conducted by doctors at the VA St. Louis Health Care System in Missouri found that COVID-19 continues to be deadlier than the flu, despite decreased mortality rates compared to the early years of the pandemic. The study, published in JAMA, reviewed electronic health records of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 or seasonal influenza from October 1, 2023, to March 27, 2024.

Key findings include: - **Statistics**: COVID-19 patients had a 5.7% death rate within 30 days of hospitalization, compared to a 4.24% death rate for influenza patients. - **Hospitalizations**: Nearly twice as many patients were hospitalized for COVID-19 than for the flu during the study period. - **Demographics**: The average age of patients was 74, and the majority were men. - **New Variants**: Variants including KP.1.1 and KP.2 have emerged, with KP.2 accounting for about a quarter of new COVID-19 cases, according to CDC wastewater sampling.

The study also highlighted that the mortality risk for COVID-19 was 35% greater than for flu, primarily affecting older adults and those who hadn't received the latest COVID-19 booster shots. The researchers concluded that while COVID-19's impact has lessened compared to the peak years, it still poses a significant health threat.

Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly and his team noted no significant mortality difference between COVID-19 patients hospitalized before and during the predominance of the JN.1 variant, indicating the newer variants are not necessarily deadlier. However, COVID-19 continues to lead in hospitalizations and mortality rates despite advancements in vaccines and treatments.

Overall, the study underscores the ongoing risk posed by COVID-19, highlighting the need for continued vigilance and vaccination efforts.