

# **Covid-19 in prime-time American medical television series**

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Since 2020 creators of television series based their storylines on our contemporary world must decide whether to include Covid-19 into the storylines. What is the right choice – from emotional and financial perspectives: to create stories that help the viewers escape from our world or reflect on our shared reality by fictionizing it? As it seems, the pandemic not only impacted the production level of the television entertainment industry – to name two: delayed release dates and new safety protocols in shootings – but on a narrative level as well.

To a different extent, the five ongoing American medical television series (*Chicago Med*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *New Amsterdam*, *The Good Doctor*, and *The Resident*) included the pandemic in their story world. The narrative analysis of Covid-19 related episodes focuses on the positioning of hospitals as spaces of treatment and the portrayal of medical technologies.

These medical series tend to represent three stages of the pandemic:

- the outbreak (early days, when Covid-19 was not a pandemic, only a mysterious contagion far from America)
- the crises (overflowed USA hospitals with limited resources)
- the aftermath (long-term health-, economic and emotional effects).

Scientific knowledge on Covid-19 constantly develops, treatment protocols, safety recommendations, and preventive opportunities change. Hence, creators of these storylines aim to react fast to be accurate – since one main characteristic of this genre is the dedication towards realistic medical content. Thus, these five series provide a peek to the viewers into Intensive Care Units (ICU) and specialized Covid-wards. Even in their dramatized way, they distribute information to their audience.