

CORRESPONDENCE

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on otolaryngologic practice

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To the Editor,

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacts healthcare service, as documented by the impressive number of publications on this issue (1-6). In addition, many scientific societies provided guidelines, recommendations, position papers, and documents concerning the practical approach for managing this compelling emergency.

However, little room has been devoted to the COVID-19 impact on the otolaryngologic practice. Therefore, the current survey evaluated the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in the daily otolaryngologic clinic. A panel of international otolaryngologists participated in this initiative using an internet platform. The list included members of the Italian Society of Rhinology and International Federation of Otorhinolaryngological Societies: 8 Italians, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Indian, one from Mexico, one from Panama, and one from Venezuela.

The questionnaire consisted of a series of specific requests, as reported in Table 1.

The results of this survey provided some interesting outcomes. First, all participants acknowledged that COVID-19 impressively reduced the outpatient visits

at otolaryngologic clinics. However, there was a wide variability on the reduction quote as it ranged from 30 to 90%. This wide range probably depended on the geographical prevalence of the pandemic, local arrangement, and personal experience.

There was an almost unanimous belief that the COVID-19 pandemic reduced both acute and chronic otolaryngologic diseases.

About the use of preventive options, there was disagreement among participants. Indeed, half of the panelists used bacteriotherapy (all of them are Italians). Consistently, intranasal lactoferrin and glycyrrhetic acid were used only by some Italian participants. On the contrary, all, but one, participants prescribed intranasal corticosteroids during the COVID-19 pandemic. Intranasal hyaluronic acid was used only by three doctors.

Practically all panelists observed patients with COVID-19, on average 116, with a range between 10 and 500 patients. However, only three otolaryngologists used hyaluronic acid in managing COVID-patients, and the only one used natural remedies.

The current survey confirmed the relevant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on outpatient visits (7,8). However, the reduction impressively ranged from 30

Table 1. International Survey on the management of ORL diseases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question	Answer
During COVID-19, did you observe a reduction of outpatients in your clinic?	All Yes
In what percentage?	57% (range 30-90%)
Did the reduction affect acute diseases?	13 Yes; 1 No
Did the reduction affect chronic diseases?	12 Yes; 2 No
Did you use local Bacteriotherapy as a preventive strategy?	7 Yes; 7 No
Did you use intranasal lactoferrin as a preventive strategy?	4 Yes; 10 No
Did you use intranasal glycyrrhetic acid as a preventive strategy?	5 Yes; 9 No
Did you use intranasal corticosteroids during the COVID-19 pandemic?	13 Yes; 1 No
Did you observe patients with COVID-19?	13 Yes; 1 No
If yes, how many?	116 (range 10-500)
Did you use intranasal hyaluronic acid in patients with COVID-19?	3 Yes; 11 No
Did you use natural remedies in patients with COVID-19?	1 Yes; 13 No

to 90%. This large variability probably was caused by the different COVID-19 epidemiology and local health resources.

The prescriptive attitude was also different among participants. In particular, most Italian participants used non-pharmacological remedies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Probably, this different approach could depend on diverse cultural traditions and available products.

In conclusion, the present survey underlined the remarkable impact of COVID-19 on otolaryngologic practice. However, vast distributive differences occurred among countries. Furthermore, the prescriptive attitude also was different among participants.

Conflict of Interest: Each author declares that he or she has no commercial associations (e.g. consultancies, stock ownership, equity interest, patent/licensing arrangement etc.) that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted article

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