



Radiotherapy treatment in Covid-19 pandemic: perception of professionals in radiological techniques

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1. Introduction

Studies on the impact of the pandemic and subsequent governmental actions on medical care activity in Brazil have discussed adaptations carried out in an unforeseen manner and, thus, based on parameters that have not yet been validated [1,2]. Araújo *et al.* signaled changes in priorities in the health system and hospital procedures to face the Covid-19 pandemic. Among them, they relate the cancellation and/or postponement of scheduled surgeries with prioritization of hospital beds for patients with Covid-19 and the reassignment of professionals. There has also been concern about the possibility of contamination of patients undergoing cancer treatment with the coronavirus. Uncertainty is related to the progression of cancer and the negative impact on the survival of the eventually infected patient [2]. Thus, a decrease in the number of consultations related to various medical specialties, including oncology, has been reported [1]. Cancer and its treatments promote changes in the lives of sick people and the pandemic context triggered by Covid-19 aggravates this scenario by generating concerns, anxiety and social restriction, due to protectionist control measures. To monitor patients undergoing radiotherapy treatment in the context of the pandemic, adaptations were necessary for the safety of patients and professionals. The impacts of these adaptations, however, must be discussed regarding the greater isolation of patients who already face changes in their lives as a result of the disease. It is considered that the disease would already be responsible for triggering feelings of uncertainty about the future, causing anxiety and fear [3]. Thus, it is justified to monitor actions developed in the radiotherapy sector to prevent Covid-19 infection and, at the same time, preventing risks for psychological issues.

2. Methodology

A survey of information was carried out through interviews with professionals of radiological techniques and trainees in the Radiotherapy Sector of a general hospital focused on oncology. The adoption of changes in the management of patients due to the pandemic caused by Covid-19 was questioned and whether these would restrict contact with them. The possible repercussions of these changes in the care provided to patients undergoing radiotherapy treatment are discussed.

3. Results and Discussion

A total of twenty people participated in this research, 80% of which were professionals hired by the hospital and 20% were trainees from the Radiotherapy Sector. Most describe that, in their work routine, they are in direct and frequent contact with patients. Some consider that this contact, however, occurs very quickly (20%). At first, they were asked if they considered they could contribute to the patient's well-being during their care and management. The answers are listed in Table 1.

Table I: Answers about the quality of contact between professionals and patients, family/accompanying people.

Answers (%)	Do you consider that you can contribute to the well-being of the patient and their family/companions?
70	Yes, I feel I can contribute.
30	Yes, but in a limited way.

All respondents consider the quality of their contact with patients and their caregivers to be important, even if it is not directly linked to the patient's general well-being.

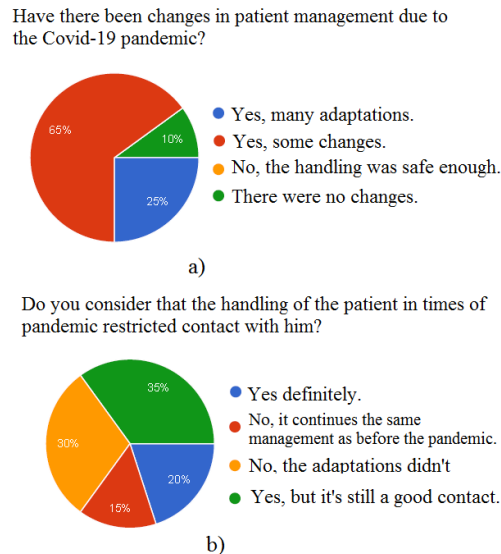


Figure 1: Distribution of responses on the perception of changes in the management of patients undergoing radiotherapy treatment and interpersonal contact restrictions.

In Figure 1 a) and b), we present the responses signaled to the question about changes in patient management due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the repercussions regarding contact with him. We found that most practitioners identified changes in patient management recommendations aimed at protecting against coronavirus infection. However, they do not consider that these changes have increased restrictions on the service itself. Only 20% of respondents considered the safety recommendations as restrictive also in relation to direct contact with patients, eventually impacting support relationships.

4. Conclusions

The professionals of radiological techniques who work in the Radiotherapy Sector have access and contact with patients undergoing treatment and feel, in general, that they can contribute to their welcoming, impacting their well-being during the procedure. Most professionals report changes in patient management to minimize the possibility of coronavirus infection. Likewise, they do not establish a relationship between limitations in physical contact and interpersonal contact as patient support.

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References

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