

Head and Neck Surgery in Times of Pandemic

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On January 31, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency. It has already affected over 352.5 million people, in over 200 nations all over the world and, today, 2022, continues to impact all aspects of our life.

The medical community found itself continuously struggling to figure out different approaches to deal with this global pandemic. In head and neck cancer surgery, as in other areas, this disease has led to a dramatic decrease in elective surgery due to a lack of resources and information; and looking for the safety of both patients and health professionals. The effects of this delay in the surgical approach are clearly evident today; poor oncological outcomes or, worst, increased loss of life.

Nowadays studies and protocols, based more on actual patient data, allow a new perspective on the safety of head and neck cancer surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of these papers is the one published by the COVIDSurg Collaborative Group "Head and Neck Cancer Surgery During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An International, Multicenter, Observational Cohort Study" [1], which included 1137 patients, with head and neck cancer, undergoing primary surgery with curative intent from 26 countries during 2019 and 2020.

The study results show that head and neck cancer surgery is safe and feasible even in communities with high-incidence of COVID-19, showing among other results that the overall 30-day post-operative mortality rate was 1.2%, similar to pre-COVID data.

The key message of this letter is that standard therapies for head and neck cancers should not be affected by COVID-19 pandemic as long as all security measures are in place.

Bibliography

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