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RESEARCH AREA: HEALTH - COMMUNITY - COMMUNICATIONS

TITLE: COVID19 pandemic: patients' perspective during cancer treatment

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UNIVPM Research Group: Clinica Oncologica

Research activity description:

Background: The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has been declared global pandemic and Italy is one of the first and heavily affected countries. Cancer patients are a population at higher risk from COVID-19 both for intrinsic fragility bound to their underlying disease and oncologic treatment delay. Aim of our survey was to investigate how cancer patients perceived their health condition, their clinical management and information communication by their medical oncologists during the pandemic.

Methods: Between 15th April and 1st May 2020 a survey was submitted to cancer patients under treatment at hospitals of Marche Region which had been invested by the pandemic. It consisted of questions regarding the perception of personal safety, continuity of cancer care and information quality provided by the Oncology Department and individual psychological distress.

Results: A total of 661 patients participated in the survey; 60.2% was female and 40.4% was aged between 46 and 65. Almost all of the attendees (97.7%) stated that the Oncologic Department complied with the appropriate safety standards and 78% was reassured about their concerns during the medical interview, but 41% was worried of being at higher risk of infection upon entry into the Oncology Department and 53.3% felt being at greater risk of infection because of chemotherapy treatment in general.



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The majority of the participants (62.2%) felt that postponing cancer treatment could reduce its efficacy, however 80% declared they did not feel abandoned at the time of treatment delay. 79.4% of the attendees felt more worried for their underlying disease in this emergency situation, but the mood worsened only for 34.2% of the participants.

Conclusions: Our survey reveals that Oncology Departments have been considered worthy of the emergency in terms of safety standards and care management by cancer patients. However, the majority of attendees perceived the mutual negative influence between their underlying oncologic disease and risk of Sars-CoV-2 infection and manifested concerns about their health condition highlighting the need for special measures to ensure safe continuity of care.

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