

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Colorectal Cancer Patients in a Tertiary Center in Romania. Single Center Retrospective Study

Botond István Kiss¹, Tatiana Daniela Sala¹, Árpád Török¹, Márton István Dénes¹, Cristian Oliviu Borz¹, Gabriel Alexandru Popescu¹, Tivadar Bara Jr¹, Mircea Gabriel Muresan¹, Ruxandra Darie¹, Valentin Daniealopol¹, Georgiana Alexandra Scurtu¹, Tamás Székely¹, Andrea Gábor-Kelemen¹, Zsolt Fülöp¹, Kálmán Gabriel Sárdi¹, Szilárd Leó Kiss², Radu Mircea Neagoe¹

¹²nd Department of Surgery, Emergency Mureș County Clinical Hospital,
University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology "George Emil Palade" Târgu Mureș,
Romania

²University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology "George Emil Palade" Târgu Mureș,
Romania

Abstract

Background: The novel coronavirus, SARS-COV-2, was first reported in Wuhan, China in the end of 2019. To curb its spread, social distancing measures and new safety regulations were implemented which led to major disruptions in colorectal cancer care. It is however unknown how it influenced the Romanian colorectal cancer care.

Methods and material: We assessed the demographical, clinical, intraoperative and pathological data of our colorectal cancer patients, 302 in total, between 15.03.2019-14.03.2021. The first year's data was considered as the control group and the second one, the study (pandemic) group.

Results: We observed a 12% decrease in colorectal cancer hospitalizations in the first year, 38,6% in the first six months. The rate of emergency admissions, colo/ileostomy formatting procedures, palliative resections, clinical metastasis was higher in the pandemic group. More advanced loco-regional invasion, a higher tumor stage, higher rate of vascular, perineural invasion, positive resection margin, and a higher lymph node yield was seen after the restrictions were implemented.

Conclusion: The COVID-19 pandemic and the response against it had a major effect on the colorectal cancer care in our country. The outcomes of these worse clinical and pathological findings are unknown, but it is important to do further research in this field. We think colorectal cancer care should have an absolute priority in future pandemics.

Key words: colorectal cancer, COVID-19 pandemic, surgery, pathological staging, delay, impact