ELECTIVE LAPAROSCOPIC CHOLECYSTECTOMY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

PAWEŁ BOGACKI, BEATA MARKOWSKA, TOMASZ GACH, RAFAŁ SOLECKI, JAN M. KRZAK, MIROSŁAW SZURA

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY, FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY
ST. JOHN GRANDE HOSPITAL IN KRAKOW, POLAND

Introduction: COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the way surgical units function. Many changes have been introduced to diminish the risk of viral transmission among patients and healthcare professionals. For many surgical units this meant cancelling elective surgeries and limiting activity to urgent and oncological surgery only. After the initial hard lock-down has been lifted and hospitals started to resume their daily function, many questions have been raised on how the functioning should be organized to minimize the epidemiological hazard. Our Surgical Department implemented a COVID procedure for all patients admitted to the hospital for elective surgery. This strategy involves a detailed epidemiological history taking, checking for disease symptoms and measuring body temperature of the patients before admitting to the hospital., All hospital visits have been disallowed. No standard COVID swabs are performed before admission. However, many hospitals have different strategies and patients find themselves confused on what is good for them and how they should act. In this chaos much of the focus is on the hospital and healthcare organization process, but little has been said about the patient's perspective on the matter. This is why we decided to go through with this study.

1. Has your doctor's appointment been rescheduled in the past few months because of the coronavirus pandemic?
   -Yes (40%)
   -No (60%)

2. If so, how long was the delay until the proposed appointment?
   -Less than a month (5%)
   -Between 1 and 3 months (27%)
   -More than 3 months (2%)
   -I didn't get the date of the next appointment – I was told to wait (66%)

3. Have you yourself decided to postpone your doctor's appointment because of the coronavirus pandemic?
   -Yes (10%)
   -No (90%)

4. Were you at any point ready to resign from your scheduled treatment because of the pandemic?
   -Yes (9%)
   -No (91%)

5. How afraid of the infection with coronavirus during the hospital stay are you?
   -Not afraid at all (23%)
   -Slightly afraid (65%)
   -Significantly afraid (8%)
   -I am terrified of the infection with coronavirus during hospitalisation (3%)

6. Deciding to go to the hospital for elective surgery, do you feel safe?
   -I do not feel safe (3%)
   -I feel less safe than before the pandemic (51%)
   -I feel the same as before the pandemic (44%)
   -I feel more safe than before the pandemic (2%)

7. Do you expect the healthcare workers to be wearing appropriate personal protection equipment while at work?
   -Yes, they should be fully protected – masks, goggles, gowns, gloves (34%)
   -I think that facemasks are enough (52%)
   -I don't think that healthcare workers should wear any PPE (15%)

8. Do you feel discomfort while being examined by a physician wearing full PPE?
   -No (62%)
   -Slight discomfort (24%)
   -I definitely feel uncomfortable (10%)

9 Are you planning on taking any additional PPE to the hospital with you?
   -Yes, I will take all PPE i can gen (e.g. facemask, face shield, goggles, gloves) (65%)
   -No (19%)
   -No, but I expect to be given appropriate PPE in the hospital (12%)

10. How troublesome do you consider the additional epidemiological measures present in the hospital during the pandemic to be? (temperature taking, epidemiological survey, hand hygiene, social distancing, no family visits)
   -Not at all (38%)
   -Slightly (53%)
   -Pretty troublesome (9%)
   -Very troublesome (0%)
   -Unbearably troublesome (0%)

11. On a scale of 1 to 10 points, how well do you think the hospital is prepared to care for patients during the pandemic? …avg 8.72…

12. Do you think you should be tested for COVID (swab test) before hospital admission?
   -Yes (20%)
   -No (29%)
   -I have no opinion (51%)

13. Do you think that healthcare professionals should be regularly tested for COVID?
   -Yes (64%)
   -No (4%)
   -I have no opinion (32%)

14. Would you be willing to do a commercial test before hospital admission? (price around 80euro)
   -Definitely yes (3%)
   -Rather yes (29%)
   -Rather no (42%)
   -Definitely no (21%)

15. Would you be willing to self-quarantine for 14 days prior to hospital admission?
   -Definitely yes (20%)
   -Rather yes (56%)
   -Rather no (11%)
   -Definitely no (8%)

Fig 1. The questionnaire – results in red

Materials and methods: We surveyed 285 consecutive patients that were admitted for elective laparoscopic cholecystectomy to the General Surgery Department of St John Grande's Hospital in Krakow after the national COVID lock-down has been lifted. Detailed questionnaire is shown in the white box to the left.

Results: 285 consecutive patients admitted to the Surgical Department for elective cholecystectomy between July 1st and August 1st have been asked to fill out a survey on admission. 252 fully filled out surveys have been gathered. 33 surveys have been excluded from the study due to their incompletion. 40% of the patients have had their surgical planes altered in some way due to the pandemic. 88,8% of patients declare no fear or slight fear of the virus, however 54% feel less safe in the hospital than before the pandemic. Median evaluation of preparation of the hospital was 9 out of 10, average score was 8.72. Majority of the patients have no opinion on whether they should be tested for coronavirus before admission. Almost no one (3.2%) is willing to pay for a commercial test prior to admission, but the majority (76.6%) is willing to self-quarantine before surgery if needed.

Conclusions: The pandemic doesn't seem to have greatly influenced patients' health-related behaviors. The general attitude towards the pandemic by patients is rather calm. Most of them feel less safe in the hospital than before the pandemic, but the level of fear is low. Very few have resigned from surgery solely because of the pandemic.

SAGES 2021