

COVID-19 in the Emergency Department: Epidemiology and changes throughout the pandemic

The unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a massive production of clinical research. However, many questions remain unanswered. In this regard, there are several limitations that hinder patient management in the emergency department, a cornerstone of hospital care for COVID-19 patients. Common problems in clinical practice include logistics and triaging of patients with non-specific symptoms, early identification of high-risk patients who should require hospital admission and more aggressive therapeutic approaches, or detection of associated complications such as pulmonary embolism. Changes in virus dynamics over time limit our understanding and ability to predict these clinical concerns in real-world practice. In this context, advanced statistics and artificial intelligence models have shown promising potential to assist specialists involved in patient management in the emergency department. However, there is significant variability and limitations depending on the methodologies, purposes and populations from which data are obtained.

This special issue focuses on exploiting epidemiological data of patients admitted to the emergency department due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection with the aim to further our understanding of the dynamics of the virus and aid patient management in the emergency department. Notable interest topics include but are not limited to disease prevalence, diagnosis, laboratory and radiological findings, clinical management, complications and mortality. Conventional statistics and artificial intelligence methods analyzing differences between patients with overlapping symptoms, predicting patient outcomes, or assisting emergency specialists in decision-making regarding particular clinical questions which arise in daily practice are especially encouraged. In addition, studies tracking changes at different stages of the pandemic are of particular interest to gain insight into the clinical variability of COVID-19.

We welcome original articles, reviews and commentaries focused on the subject. The goal is to gain a longitudinal perspective on the challenges of the pandemics in the emergency department: how it started, the status quo and what can we expect with increasing vaccination across different countries.

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