HIV Drug Therapy GLASGOW 2022

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic in HIV diagnosis: the experience of a Central Hospital in Lisbon, Portugal

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Background

Since march 2020 the priority of public health was to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. This event impaired health care services ability to assist patients with other diseases and HIV infection was not an exception. The aim of this study was to evaluate which impact SARS-CoV-2 pandemic had in new diagnosis of HIV infection and respective referral for infectious disease consultation of a central hospital in Lisbon, as well as analysis of patients demographics and their clinical characteristics.

Materials and Methods

We conducted a descriptive and retrospective study that included the patients with new HIV diagnosis referred to our outpatient care unit and the ones diagnosed in our inpatient department from January 1st 2016 to 31st December 2021. Clinical, laboratory and demographic data were collected from medical records.

Results

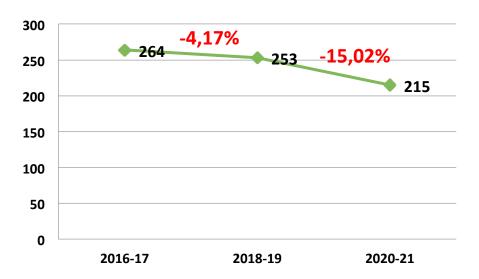**Figure 1. Number of new HIV diagnosis in the 3 bienniums (2016-17, 2018-19, 2020-21)**

Table 1. Patients characteristics at the time of HIV diagnosis

	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21
Sex			
Male, n (%)	211 (79,92)	191 (75,49)	173 (80,47)
Age			
Average (years)	42,64	42,04	37,7
Nationality			
Three most common, n (%)	PT, 105 (39,77) BR, 88 (33,33) GNB, 21 (5,77)	PT, 85 (33,60) BR, 74 (29,25) GNB, 33 (13,04)	PT, 88 (40,93) BR, 63 (29,30) GNB, 19 (8,84)
Transmission route			
MSM, n (%)	123 (46,59)	115 (60,21)	125 (72,25)
MSW, n (%)	87 (32,95)	82 (32,41)	69 (32,09)
IDU, n (%)	3 (1,14)	0	3 (1,40)
TCD4 count			
Median (cells/µL)	402	407	387
< 350 cells/µL, n (%)	88 (33,33)	90 (35,57)	91 (42,32)
<200 cells/µL, n (%)	42 (15,90)	46 (18,18)	49 (22,79)
Viral load			
>100.000copies/mL, n (%)	158 (59,85)	120 (47,43)	111 (51,63)
AIDS-defining disease, n (%)	47 (17,80)	51 (20,16)	55 (25,58)
Co-infection			
HBV, n (%)	7 (2,65)	11 (4,35)	12 (5,58)
HCV, n (%)	14 (5,30)	14 (5,53)	9 (4,19)

Table 2. Origin of patients referral

	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21
Community-based screening programs, n (%)	64 (24,2)	80 (31,6)	98 (45,6)
Outpatient department, n (%)	40 (15,1)	40 (15,8)	29 (13,5)
Primary health care unit, n (%)	34 (12,9)	28 (11,1)	25 (11,6)
Emergency department, n (%)	23 (8,7)	34 (13,4)	28 (13,0)
Hospital ward, n (%)	14 (5,3)	17 (6,7)	19 (8,8)
Other country, n (%)	71 (26,9)	47 (18,6)	11 (5,1)
Unknown, n (%)	18 (6,8)	7 (2,8)	5 (2,3)

PT- Portugal, BR – Brazil, GNB – Guinea-Bissau, MSM –Men who have sex with men, MSW – Men who have sex with women, IDU – Intravenous drug user

Conclusions

We verified that there was a decline in new HIV diagnosis even before the COVID-19 era, although this decline aggravated after the beginning of this pandemic. During the pandemic, we were able to maintain our usual outpatient HIV clinic activity and receive patients referred with new HIV diagnosis, so other external factors contributed to this decline.