

## Peer Review Report

# Review Report on Delivering safe surgical care while simultaneously caring for Patients with COVID-19; Assessment of Patient Selection, Volume and Outcomes in a Tertiary Care Hospital

Original Article, Int J Public Health

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### EVALUATION

#### **Q 1** Please summarize the main findings of the study.

The authors of this study investigated the feasibility of safe surgical care in a clinical care setting simultaneously handling the COVID-19 cases during the pandemic, utilizing the data from pre-pandemic and intra-pandemic periods. The main findings of this study showed that the evaluated center could provide the health services in a sound fashion and the surgical outcomes and complications were almost similar to the results of surgeries conducted before the pandemic. Gastrointestinal surgeries as the focus of this study, make a significant proportion of abdominal conditions of which conservative management of cases could deteriorate patient status and risk the life of cases. Findings of this study contribute to the body of evidence about continuum of care during the pandemic era to save more lives while caring for infected cases, without any major complications.

#### **Q 2** Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

Strengths: this study benefits from a well-designed methodology to investigate the objectives. Also, using a data from pretty good interval before the pandemic to compare the results of surgical outcomes during the pandemic with those of happening during the pandemic, is the other strength of this study. Limitations: focusing only the gastrointestinal surgeries is a major limitation of this study. Also, not recording surgical outcomes and complications for more than the 90-day period was the other limitation. The single-center design of this study could be another limitation that might limit generalizability of the findings. Not including the characteristics of the surgical care team in study variables and statistical analyses was another major limitation, as now we know a significant impact was received by the healthcare providers during the pandemic and the variations of surgical outcomes done by different surgeons could be a confounder in this study.

#### **Q 3** Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

1. Abstract, lines 26-35: enriching the methods and results parts of the methods could be beneficial for readers. The current provided material is insufficient, especially in the results section.
2. Research in context, lines 43-77: based on the guidelines of the IJPH, this section is not necessary to be included in a manuscript. It seems this section is provided for another journal (probably The Lancet group). However, the material on the systematic review of publications is interesting and could be added to the introduction section of the manuscript in the case authors decide to delete this section.
3. Introduction, lines 113-116: the part on the Switzerland needs more expansion as the setting of this study took place in this country. More information on the status of Switzerland in the COVID-19 pandemic and preparedness and performance of its health system for the pandemic area is highly suggested. Adding some references to back up such information is essential.

4. Methods, lines 133–134: regarding the inclusion criteria, more details or a list of emergency or elective surgical procedures for gastrointestinal disorders that made candidates eligible to enter study is necessary to be added to the main text or as a supplementary.
5. Methods, lines 186–187: it seems the study investigators mentioned some exclusion criteria for cases in the last paragraph, It also needs to be declared where authors introduce the inclusion criteria for study in first paragraph of the methods section.
6. Results, line 207–208: in the methods, authors mentioned exclusion of gastric bypass cases (line 186) and in the results line 207 a report of decreased number of gastric bypass surgeries is mentioned for the pandemic period compared to the previous three years. This issue needs a revision.
7. Methods, line 173: more details on the used linear regression models could be beneficial here. Were all dependent variables in models continuous ones? Was there any need for a logistic regression? A revision could be helpful.
8. Results: it is suggested to provide the results of the regression analyses in some tables for a better presentation of the conducted statistical analysis.
9. Discussion: a part comparing the results on the surgical complications in this study with similar literature is lacking in this section.

#### PLEASE COMMENT

**Q 4** Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

The provided title is well chosen and reflects the main study notion.

**Q 5** Are the keywords appropriate?

The included keywords are sound.

**Q 6** Is the English language of sufficient quality?

The language use has sufficient quality.

**Q 7** Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

**Q 8** Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)

The included list of references cover the literature in field adequately.

#### QUALITY ASSESSMENT

**Q 9** Originality



**Q 10** Rigor



**Q 11** Significance to the field



**Q 12** Interest to a general audience



**Q 13** Quality of the writing



**Q 14** Overall scientific quality of the study



#### REVISION LEVEL

**Q 15** Please make a recommendation based on your comments:

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Major revisions.