

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Physician deaths from COVID-19

We thank Dr. Modenese and Professor Gobba for their comments on COVID-19-related physician deaths in Italy. The course of the pandemic continues to change since our tabulations from 15 April 2020 [1]. As of 18 June 2020 the countries with the most deaths from COVID-19 in descending order are the USA, Brazil, the UK and Italy [2].

All countries have struggled to provide appropriate personal protective equipment to health care workers. We acknowledge the bravery and service of Italian physicians such as Roberto Stella who continued to care for patients despite running out of masks [3]. In our Results section [1] we recognized that the Italian National Federation of Medicine Surgery and Odontology had the most comprehensive listing of physician deaths of all the countries we examined. We regarded retired physicians who returned to work during the pandemic as physician deaths in the line of duty [1], and out of respect for their sacrifice used a more liberal age limit in our inclusion criteria.

General practitioners and emergency medicine physicians were listed together as a group because they are usually the first point of contact in patient care. Also, in Canada family medicine graduates provide the majority

of emergency care [4]. Understandably this may differ in other countries.

In our study dentists accounted for 6% of the physician deaths, but this was an overall figure from 21 countries [1].

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