



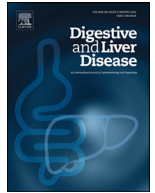
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EDITORIAL

Digestive and Liver Diseases and the COVID-19 Pandemic



Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the highly contagious zoonotic coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. The first cases of the disease were reported in China in December 2019; in the following months, the infection spread across the world, and by March 2020, it had been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. To contain the spread of the infection, emergency measures, ranging from various degrees of social distancing to complete lockdowns have been adopted in different countries at different times. This has left a deep mark on peoples' minds but above all has had profound consequences on public health and the economy. The healthcare systems in many countries have been stretched to the limit, and, in general, they have all been significantly reshaped to deal with the infectious emergency. The high contagiousness and the unpredictable request of admission for symptomatic patients has led hospitals to reconvert several units into coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) facilities, requiring the recruitment of medical and nursing staff, taken from both medical and surgical departments, for the treatment of pulmonary or infectious diseases. Consequently, the normal activities of the other hospital departments have been considerably altered, with the postponement or outright cancellation of operations, procedures and visits deemed "non-urgent". This has had the immediate consequence of lengthening the waiting lists for elective health services and will cause a surge of requests in the future when the situation will hopefully return gradually to normal. Gastroenterology and endoscopy units have shared this fate and have seen a reduction in the elective admissions and procedures as well as a reshaping of the layout of the units and of the performance of procedures. In the last few months, several Scientific Societies such as the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) [1], the European Society of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition (ESPGHAN) [2], the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG) [3], the European Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ESGE) [4] and others have issued documents aimed at giving guidance for the management of adult and pediatric patients with gastrointestinal diseases during the COVID 19 pandemic. In parallel, Digestive and Liver Disease has received a substantial number of papers dealing with several aspects of the management of patients with

digestive diseases during the pandemic. Some of these papers concern the application of the guidelines, some describe the clinical consequences of the COVID-19 on the gastrointestinal tract and the liver, others deal with the changes in the management of patients, and still others with the risks and the distress caused to the patients by the cancellation or postponement of consultations and procedures. Taken together, these papers give a vivid picture of the real-life consequences of the COVID -19 pandemic on the management of gastrointestinal diseases. For this reason, we decided to create a new monthly section of the Journal called "DLD and the COVID-19 pandemic" devoted to the various facets of the interaction between the COVID-19 pandemic and gastrointestinal diseases. This section will contain a selection of COVID-19 papers and will be maintained for the duration of the pandemic. All types of contributions (guidelines, originals, reviews, commentaries, editorials, letters, images of the month) will be welcomed, provided they offer relevant, original, and good-quality information concerning the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 infection on gastrointestinal, hepatic and pancreatic diseases. We look forward to receiving the contributions of our readers on this very "hot" topic.

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