National Survey of COVID-19 Infections Among Head Surgical Specialists Regarding Orthopedic Foot and Ankle Surgeons in Mexico

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Introduction/Purpose: The health contingency due to COVID19 has represented an unprecedented state of health contingency with implications for the economy and public health. There is a concern in the medical community regarding the risk of contagion of COVID19. Recently, the occupational risk of contagion by COVID19 has been described in surgical specialties that involve proximity to the face and airway of the patient Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology and head and neck surgery (ENT). A possibility has been raised that Foot and Ankle joint surgeons have some occupational protection due to the distance greater than 1m with respect to the patient's airway during surgical activities. The objective of this study is to compare COVID-19 infections referred by different surgical specialties and subspecialties.

Methods: An observational, cross-sectional, and descriptive study will be carried out in which a survey will be applied to 134 surgical specialists divided into 3 groups (ophthalmology, ENT, and orthopedic surgeons performing foot and ankle surgery) during the months of August to September 2020.Percentage prevalences of each variable to be evaluated will be obtained, likewise, a Chi-square test will be applied to determine statistical differences between the proportions of referred positivity in the 3 groups. This research study was reviewed by our institution and hospital research ethics committee. All participants gave their informed consent at the time of conducting the survey, as well as allowing the use of their responses for the purposes of this project.

Results: A total of 134 surveys pertaining to 30, 69, and 35 Mexican ophthalmology, ENT, and orthopedic surgeons who perform foot and ankle surgery respectively were evaluated. The geographical distribution of the surveys is identified in figure 1. After the statistical analysis, non-significant statistical differences ($p > 0.32$) were documented in the proportion of infections between ophthalmologists or ENTs, with respect to the proportion of infections referred by COVID-19 in the group of Orthopedic foot and ankle surgeons surveyed.

Conclusion: When analyzing the results of this survey-type study, it is possible to establish that the statistically non-significant differences between the proportions of infections of the groups of specialists evaluated could suggest that the working distance with respect to the patient's airway is not a protective factor for contagion. by COVID-19. Preventive strategies, as well as the vaccination of health personnel involved in patient care, are essential.

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