

Posters

Clinical Quality: Patient Centredness

96 IMPACT OF COVID19 RESTRICTIONS ON OLDER PATIENTS ATTENDING AN OUTPATIENT SERVICE

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Introduction: During the Covid19 pandemic older adults (>70 years) in Ireland were advised to stay at home and avoid unnecessary physical contact—termed “cocooning”. During this time hospital outpatient appointments were conducted virtually (via telephone). This project aimed to assess patients experience of Covid19 cocooning and the virtual outpatient service.

Methods: Patients attending an outpatient geriatric medicine service were invited to participate in this project following their routine virtual assessment. A proforma questionnaire was administered to participants contacted virtually within one week of consent. Data was anonymised, imported into excel and analysed using SPSS (chi-squared test).

Results: 31 patients were included, median age was 83 years. 52% were male, 25% lived alone and 52% had cognitive impairment. 77% had heard of “cocooning”, of which 79% correctly understood the term. Three-quarters stated that cocooning had negatively impacted their quality of life (QoL); anxiety, loneliness and depression were reported in 49%, 36% and 29% respectively. 39% strongly feared getting Covid19. Cognition and living status did not correlate significantly with the psychological impact of Covid19. 61% did not use modern social media, its use did not impact QoL scores ($p = 0.075$). 45% experienced a reduction in support services. 87% found the OPD telephone service useful and 77% reported their needs were addressed. Three-quarters favoured future virtual assessments.

Conclusion: One third of patients poorly understood “cocooning”. Necessary Covid19 restrictions impacted negatively psychologically on this older cohort. Novel virtual clinics proved a positive experience and a useful future outpatient resource even amongst our oldest patients with dementia.