

improvement include inquiring about infection severity, assessing social conditions for quarantine and confirming instructions for self-monitoring and follow-up. In line with CDC recommendations, we believe regular evaluation and feedback of case investigators' skills are crucial to quality assurance of a public health department.

Key messages:

- A detailed interview provides critical data for monitoring infected individuals and quickly trace, test and isolate those who might have been exposed, thus breaking chains of transmission.
- The results of this assessment can be used to introduce training measures such as shadowing and role-playing to ensure continued improvement in epidemiological investigations.

Evaluation of COVID-19 case investigators' interviewing skills in a portuguese public health unit

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An effective control of the COVID-19 pandemic requires a thorough epidemiological interview of reported cases. The interviewer's skills and preparation directly affect the outcome of the investigation. This study applied a self-assessment survey of the COVID-19 patient interviewing skills on a local public health department workforce. The findings may be used to improve the quality of the interview process and the overall response to the pandemic at a community level. A 50-item questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale was adapted from the COVID-19 Patient Interview Skills Assessment Form created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and applied to 50 healthcare workers involved in epidemiological investigation of COVID-19 cases in Almada and Seixal, two municipalities of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, from January to April of 2021. The most frequently executed steps concern checking patient data in advance (92%), questioning symptoms (97.2%), contact tracing (100%) and determining isolation periods for high risk contacts (100%). Least performed tasks include confirming the testing technique used (50%), asking about hospitalization (44.4%), assessing conditions for home isolation (44%), explaining how to self-monitor symptoms (61%) and checking if the patient understood the instructions (47%). In addition, 8% admitted to not always keeping patient information confidential. While caution is necessary as the data was limited to a single public health local department, our findings show that a majority of healthcare workers fulfill the essential steps of an epidemiological investigation. Areas in need of