

11253**Coronavirus-related stress, anxiety, and obsessive thinking in patients undergoing cardiac rehabilitation during the COVID19 pandemic**

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Funding Acknowledgements: Type of funding sources: Public grant(s) – National budget only. Main funding source(s): Slovenian Research Agency and Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia**Background:** The coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic has disrupted the provision of health care, including cardiac rehabilitation. Reduced healthcare provision has been associated with reduced accessibility, whereas patients' perspectives – such as COVID19-related anxiety, stress and obsessive thinking – have been less thoroughly addressed.**Methods:** This was a cross-sectional study of COVID19-related anxiety, stress and obsessive thinking in consecutive patients undergoing outpatient cardiac rehabilitation after myocardial infarction at two centres — a general hospital catering a predominantly rural area and a university hospital in an urban area. From April to October 2021 we captured patients' clinical and socio-economic characteristics, and responses to the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) as well as to three dedicated COVID19-related questionnaires – the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale, the Obsession with COVID-19 Scale and a customized COVID-19 Stress Scale.**Results:** We included 109 patients (mean age 59 ± 10 years, 20% women). Fifteen (13.8%) and eleven (11%) patients reached a HADS threshold for depression and anxiety, respectively. Patients expressed most concerns regarding the safety of COVID19 vaccines (60.6%) on the COVID19 Stress Scale, sleeping disturbances (14.8%) on the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale, and fear of interacting with infected people (30.3%) on the Obsession with COVID-19 Scale. No significant differences were observed between respondents from the general and the university hospital. HADS score and social status—but not age, sex and clinical characteristics—were associated with scores on the COVID-19-specific questionnaires; HADS-anxiety domain score remained an independent predictor of COVID19-related stress ($p=0.009$), obsessive thinking ($p<0.001$) and anxiety ($p=0.009$) after multivariate adjustment.**Conclusions:** Patients undergoing cardiac rehabilitation expressed relatively low levels of COVID19-related stress and anxiety. Higher levels of COVID19-related stress, anxiety, and obsessive thinking were observed in patients with higher levels of anxiety, but not in association with demographic or clinical characteristics.