

## **High school students' attitudes towards SARS-CoV-2 pandemic: an online cross-sectional survey**

**Julia Komorzycka**

*J Komorzycka<sup>1</sup>, E Sobieraj<sup>1</sup>, M Ganczak<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Collegium Medicum, University of Zielona Gora, Zielona Gora, Poland

<sup>2</sup>Department of Infectious Diseases, Collegium Medicum, University of Zielona Gora, Zielona Gora, Poland

Contact: jmkomorzycka@gmail.com

### **Background:**

Adolescents play a major role in SARS-CoV-2 spread. The study objective was to assess COVID-19 attitudes among Polish final year high school students.

### **Methods:**

An online cross-sectional survey was conducted between December 2020-March 2021; 24 high schools were randomly selected in Lubuskie region, followed by a random selection of

51 classes. Students' attitudes were assessed by an anonymous questionnaire before an online lecture on SARS-CoV-2.

**Results:**

Response rate was 72%, 638 students responded (360 females, mean age  $18.4 \pm 0.6$  years); 438 attended schools in towns with <100,000 inhabitants; 201 were in the science program; 7.4% reported past SARS-CoV-2 infection (5% females vs 10.8% males;  $p=0.006$ ). 52.2% believed COVID-19 is a serious disease (more females, those in larger cities and in the science program,  $p=0.02$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $p < 0.001$  respectively). However, 71.3% were not afraid of getting SARS-CoV-2 infection (more males and those not in the science program,  $p=0.0007$ ;  $p=0.01$  respectively); 59.1% were concerned that their parents and 68.7% their grandparents will get COVID-19 (more females, those in larger cities and in the science program, both:  $p=0.0004$ ;  $p=0.004$ ;  $p=0.0005$  respectively). Only 16.5% believed that government recommendations effectively control the epidemic (more in the science program;  $p=0.01$ ); 44.6% supported lockdown as an effective strategy (more those in larger cities and in the science program; both:  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusions:**

The findings show low awareness of SARS-CoV-2 infection risk, deficiencies in appropriate attitudes and lack of trust regarding the epidemic management among the high school students. Given attitudes determine people's actions, to limit SARS-CoV-2 transmission and strengthen positive attitudes further investigation into the factors underlying the lack of risk perception is warranted.

**Key messages:**

- The study provides perspectives of youth for policymakers that should be taken into account while implementing educational programs related to COVID-19.
- We recommend implementing COVID-19 knowledge into school curricula to improve students' risk perception and attitudes.