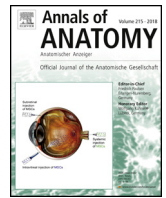




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EDITORIAL

Anatomy in times of pandemia – Impact on teaching and body donations

**Keywords:**

SARS-CoV-2
Body donations
Dissection courses
Teaching
Anatomy

The impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has not only been intensively discussed in the anatomical institutes but has also led to different consequences and approaches. A number of publications have already appeared reporting on the impact that the pandemic has had on the activities in anatomical institutes (Ahmad et al., 2021; Banovac et al., 2021; Böckers et al., 2021; Darici et al., 2021; Harmon et al., 2021; Jones, 2021; Manzanares-Céspedes et al., 2021; Naidoo et al., 2020; Singal et al., 2021a, b; Wolniczak et al., 2020). To obtain further information on the procedures in departments, a short survey was sent to all members of the Anatomische Gesellschaft (Anatomical Society) in March 2021. Members from 40 institutes participated in the survey; 39 members from human anatomy departments (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, USA) and one member from the field of veterinary anatomy (Germany). The results spotlighted the impact of the pandemic on work and teaching in the institutes of anatomy:

The first question in this survey concerned incoming body donations. In 23% of the institutes, a Covid 19 test was performed on incoming donor bodies, in 88% of those a PCR test was used (Fig. 1A). In 12 institutes, the consequence of a positive test was immediate cremation. In two locations, the bodies were included in scientific examinations. The next question addressed the rejection of

SARS-CoV2 positive-tested donated bodies. In 78%, the body donations were rejected (Fig. 2A). Did the pandemic have an impact on the procedural regulations? In 74%, no changes were made in the preservation procedures of the cadavers, which conversely means that 26% of the institutes made a change (Fig. 2B). In 82% the staff's personal equipment was improved, for example by the provision of FFP2 masks (Fig. 2C). Was the number of new donation agreements affected? In 92% the number of new donation agreements remained unchanged, at individual institutes an increase or decrease was observed (Fig. 3A). The number of incoming donations was unchanged in 51%. In 38.5% the number decreased and in 10.5% increased (Fig. 3B).

An important topic also was the number and procedure of courses offered in the institutes. The dissection course (winter semester 20–21/summer semester 21) was held in 80/76%, while 7.5/3% dropped out and in 12.5/21% the course was generally not held in that semester (Fig. 4A,B). At two locations, the preparation course was conducted entirely online. At the other locations, the course or courses were conducted in a modified and hybrid mode with reduced attendance/partial attendance and additional online seminars. At one place SARS-CoV-2 infections appeared in the dissection course without related infections within the home environment. The source of infections remained unknown. At all other places no SARS-Cov-2 infected students occurred in the dissection courses in which participants were physically present. Without going into detail, the pandemic also influenced other courses such as neuroanatomy, histology or embryology. A clear tendency towards increased online teaching was observed. Annual burial ceremonies could not be held in 92%. Clinical courses were

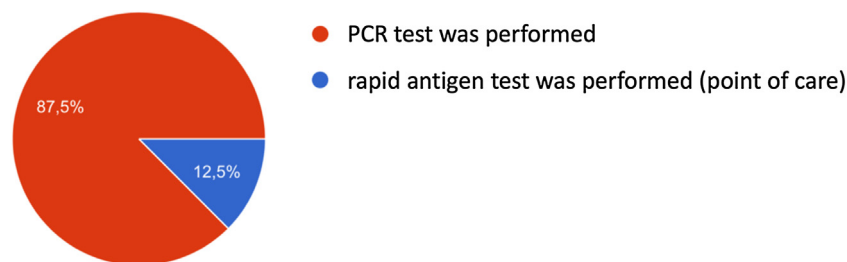


Fig. 1. A: Percentages of applied tests.

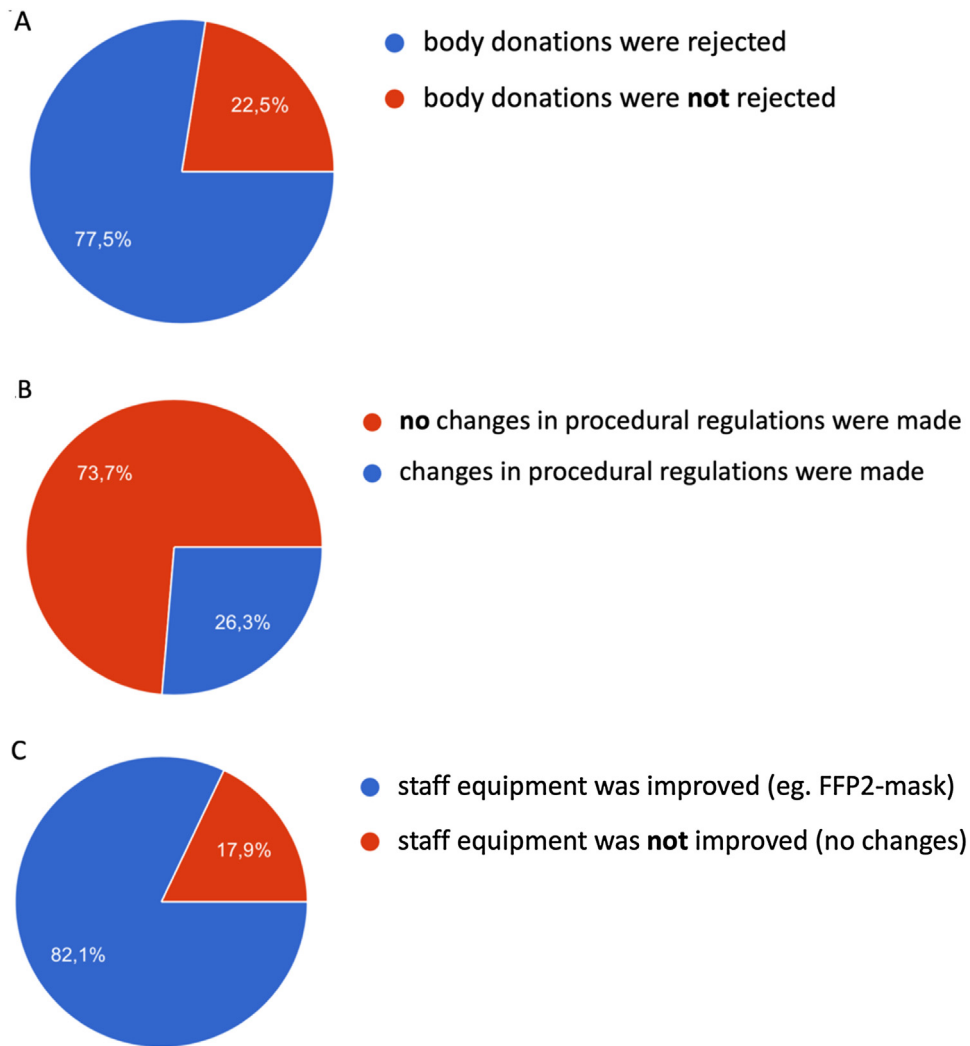


Fig. 2. A,B,C: Percentages of rejected/not rejected body donations (A), changes/no changes in procedural regulations (B), improved/not improved staff equipment (C).

also cancelled in 92%. The memorial services and clinical courses that were held, observed additional hygiene measures. In 88% no financial compensation was awarded for cancelled clinical courses. In summary, the pandemic had and still has an impact on work

in many anatomical institutes. Teaching has changed – donation agreements and donations are not affected at most places – for many bereaved, delay of the burial and no ceremony is difficult.

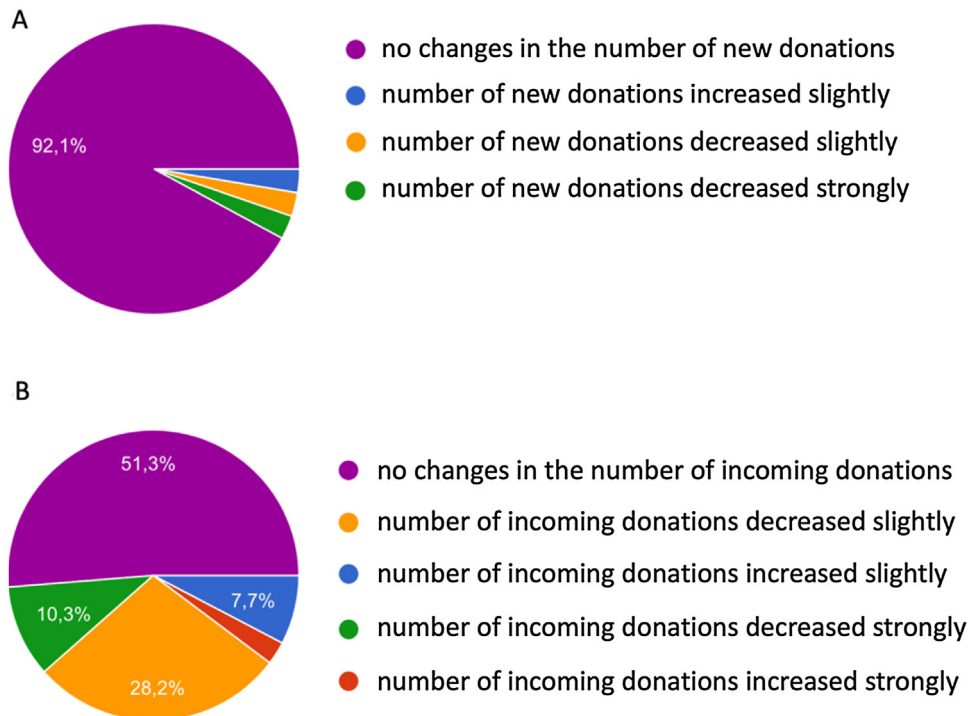


Fig. 3. A,B: Movements in new donation agreements (A), movements in incoming donations (bodies, B).

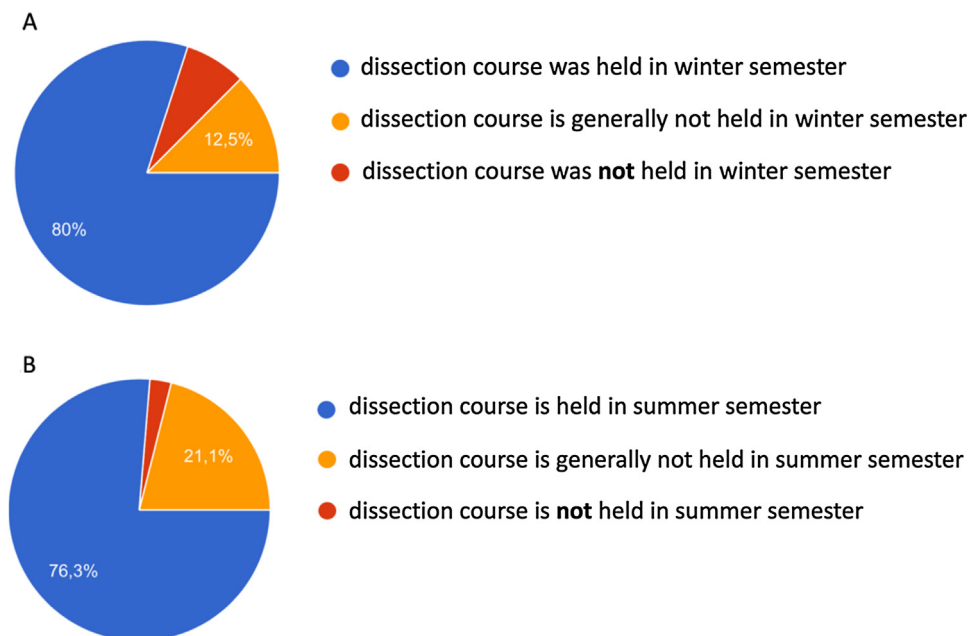


Fig. 4. A,B: Dissection courses in winter semester 2020/2021 (A) and summer semester 2021 (B).

Conflicts of interest

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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