

Is Colorectal Cancer Stage Affected by COVID-19 Pandemic?

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Abstract

Background: Causing healthcare systems overload, COVID-19 pandemic has a huge influence on patients with colorectal cancer. The aim of our study was to assess the potential impact of COVID-19 on the stage of colorectal cancer.

Methods: In our retrospective study, two groups of patients operated for colorectal cancer were analyzed at the Clinic for Surgery "Nikola Spasic", Zvezdara University Medical Center. The study group consisted of 49 patients operated in the period from March 15, 2020 to April 2021, during COVID-19 pandemic. The control group consisted of 152 patients, who were operated on in the period from January 1, 2019. to December 31, 2019.

Results: There were no difference in surgical approach, prevalence of stoma, percentages of postoperative complications and rates of hospital readmission between both groups. T4b tumor stage was statistically significant more common in the study group (12.2% vs 3.3%, $p=0.027$). Locally advanced tumors, stage IIC, were statistically significantly more common in the group of patients operated on during the COVID-19 pandemic (10.2% vs 1.3%, $p=0.01$).

Conclusion: Higher number of locally advanced tumors in study group could probably be caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare system.

Key words: colorectal cancer, COVID-19, cancer stage