

12|05|2020

RECOVER Work Package 2 and the national coordinating team

Extended Point Prevalence Audit Survey (PPAS)

Results for Ireland





This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101003589.



Extended PPAS Ireland

General information

The point prevalence audit survey (PPAS) was initiated in January 2020 in 18 European countries to capture information with respect to antibiotic prescribing and diagnostic testing for patients presenting in primary care with symptoms of an acute respiratory tract infection. The anonymous registration of patients' characteristics, signs and symptoms, physical examination results and the management of general practitioners with respect to diagnostic testing, prescribing of antibiotics and other medicines, and provided self-care advice was very smoothly implemented in about 125 primary care practices throughout Europe.

This first PPAS was nearly finished when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe. Given the success of the PPAS, it was decided to extend the initial survey with COVID-19 specific items. Running this extended PPAS throughout Europe will provide information of how patients with respiratory tract infection are managed during the pandemic, what medicines are prescribed and advice provided, and will reveal marked differences between countries with respect to patient management.

Study information

- Country: IRELAND
- Registration period: 27 February 2020 to 10 April 2020
- Total number of patient consultations: 241

Overall remarks on Irish data

- The majority of patients were contacted by telephone and had a mild illness
- O2 saturation was done in most patients seen at the practice; other tests were only performed in very few patients
- 8% of all patients were tested for COVID
- COVID was suspected in around 35% of patients, in half of these patients GPs would have wanted to test for SARS-CoV-2
- In 13% of those who had suspected COVID, an antibiotic was prescribed
- 75% of patients were advised to go into home isolation for on average 14 days
- GPs were moderately confident to confident about the management of patients, irrespective of whether they suspected COVID
- Only very few patients were referred to hospital, but 23% was referred to a COVID centre

From separate interviews with GPs and patients during April/May (these GPs and patients were not necessarily part of the PPAS study), the following emerged:

- Due to COVID-19, many patients are fearful to attend general practice and do not want to overburden GPs, while GPs are increasingly worried that patients with chronic and other non-COVID related diseases are not presenting, in particular elderly patients.
- Practices have had to change the organisation of consultations and management of patients very quickly. The near full replacement of face-to-face consultation with telephone consultation has been a challenge which has been embraced and some commented that

they will integrate more telephone consultations as part of their clinical practice in the future (i.e. after the pandemic).

- GP practices in Ireland are business entities where both public and private patients are seen. As most consultations are currently telephone consultations, this poses a knock-on effect on the practice's finances resulting in cuts in salary and job losses (or reduced hours).
- PPE is available but limited and practices are required to buy PPE using practice funds. PPE has been provided by the HSE but not enough especially outside of Dublin and the wait-time has been lengthy.
- GPs feel that patients have been compliant with governmental restrictive measures (stay at home, hand hygiene) and are listening to the guidance provided by the HSE (national health service).
- Patients have described long waiting times for COVID-19 testing as well as receiving their results. COVID-19 testing is organised through general practices at regional testing centres.



Consultation (N=241)				
Consultation at	Practice	15.8%		
	Home	0.8%		
	Protective measures: yes	90.0%	apron/body protection	83.3%*
			face, nose/mouth protection	97.2%
			safety glasses	61.1%
			gloves	80.6%
	Telephone	76.3%		
Video/skype	6.2%			
Has patient already been tested for COVID?	Yes	4.6%	Result:	
			Positive	0%*
			Negative	27.3%
			Unknown	72.7%
	No	92.1%		
Patient characteristics				
Age	Median (IQR)	40 (24-56)		
Comorbidity	Yes	36.5%	chronic respiratory condition	65.9%*
			diabetes	14.8%
			cardiovascular disease	22.7%
Measured:				
Fever	Yes	75%*	Temp ≥38 or <36	17.1%*
O ₂	Yes	55%*	Saturation <96%	15.4%*
Resp. rate	Yes	62.5%*	Resp. rate >20 or <12	1.5% [^]
Signs and symptoms				
Rhinitis	Yes	35.3%		
Sore throat	Yes	43.2%		
Cough	Yes	73.9%	short of breath (dyspnoea)	23.2% [#]
			abnormal auscultation	20.0% ^{''}
			(pleuritic) chest pain	1.7% [#]
			tachypnoea	2.1% [#]
General symptoms	Yes	50.6%	headache	25.3% [#]
			altered mental status	0%

			fatigue	22.4%
			diarrhoea	2.1%
Overall illness severity	Mild	78.4%		
	Moderate	18.3%		
	Severe	2.5%		
Additional diagnostic tests	Yes	17.5%”	CRP CRP Median (IQR)	14.3%*
			COVID-19 test	71.4%
			Total white blood cell count	14.3%
			Chest X-ray	0%
Suspected aetiology	viral (no COVID-19)			48.5%
	COVID-19			19.9%
	bacterial			19.5%
	allergic			5%
	not clear			10.0%
Initial working diagnosis	acute pharyngitis/tonsillitis/abscess		12.9%	
	laryngitis/laryngotracheitis		0.8%	
	influenza-like-illness		2.5%	
	bronchiolitis		0%	
	acute bronchitis		7.5%	
	CAP		2.1%	
	exacerbation COPD/asthma		6.6%	
	upper RTI		44%	
	COVID-19		35.3%	
			Contacted public health authorities?	5.9%*
		Would you recommend testing?	57.6%	
GP provided	advice for home isolation	74.7%	how many days? Median	14 (14-14)
	advice for symptomatic treatment	14.9%	(ICQ)	
	a scheduled follow-up visit/call	10.4%		
	prescribed medication	37.8%	inhaled medication	11.6%#

			antibiotic	23.2%
			antiviral medication	2.9%
			antihistamines	1.7%
	advice for family members	64.7%	home isolation	20.8%#
			social distancing	40.8%
			other	3.7%
	preventive measures for patient	66.4%	extra handwashing	57.3%#
			sneezing in sleeve	44.4%
			social distancing	40.8%
			nose/mouth protection	39.4%
			staying in separate room	41.9%
	other		11.2%	
	where to find reliable information	54.8%		
GP prescribed	Antibiotics if working diagnose was COVID-19		Yes	12.9%
Confidence that provided advice/treatment will benefit this patient	Very confident	13.3%	Very confident	9.5% [§]
	Confident	55.2%	Confident	57.1% [§]
	Moderately	28.2%	Moderately	32.1% [§]
	Unconfident	1.7%	Unconfident	1.2% [§]
	Very unconfident	0%	Very unconfident	0.0% [§]
	Referral to hospital	2.1%		
	Advise contact/refer to COVID-specific authority	22.9%		

* percentage from yes

“ percentage from F2F contact

percentage from total (n=240)

^ percentage from adults and yes

§ if suspected etiology is COVID-19

