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International Society of
Arthroplasty Registries

11th International Congress of Arthroplasty Registries

Dublin, Ireland, September 3-5, 2022

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No. 112

What did Italian patients feel when their arthroplasty was delayed due to COVID-19 lockdown? Analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews by Italian National Arthroplasty Registry (RIAP)

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Introduction

Due to the Covid emergency, in Italy from March until May 2020 all delayable elective surgeries were postponed and more than 50.000 orthopaedic patients have been suspended and operated on months later.

The qualitative study by the RIAP research group aimed at revealing the emotional and behavioural response in patients to that situation, the patterns of patient-surgeon relationship, as well as other relevant topics emerging from individual narratives. The study gives a snapshot of the situation and of its influence on the quality of life and on the procedure-related decisions.

Materials and Methods

Qualitative sociological semi-structured interviews on 28 patients who had their primary or revision procedures of hip or knee prosthesis delayed: 12 men, 16 women (from North (11), Centre (11) and South (6) of Italy), aged from 23 to 80.

Results

Recurrent emotional and behavioural responses to the “suspended” situation are revealed: anxiety, anger, fear, sadness, feeling of uncertainty, insecurity, helplessness, hope, serenity, self-discipline, passiveness, acceptance. In some cases they were triggered while in others alleviated by the commonality of the Covid-related lockdown. The procedure-related strategies adopted by the patients varied from quiet expectation to fear-induced voluntary rescheduling.

Discussion/Conclusion

The Recovery and Resilience plan that guides the public health reorganisation in Italy, according to the Next Generation EU, sees the patient role as paramount. Understanding patients’ perception of both their own state of health and the uncertainty of the situation might help improve the decision-making, hence benefiting the quality of the care services.

Notes