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# Patients' perception of arthroplasty delays in Italy due to COVID-19. Uncertainty as a new state of mind. A pilot study by RIAP Working Group

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## Introduction

To face the pandemic emergency, in Italy almost all delayable surgeries in election were suspended in March 2020 and resumed at a reduced pace starting from June 2020. More than 50.000 patients in the waiting lists for a joint implant elective procedure were *in limbo* without knowing when the surgical activity would resume. This pilot study explored the problem of their emotional status, and its influence on the quality of life and on the decisions, in order to lay the basis for further considerations on what can be done to mitigate the risk of the growing disorientation on the patients' side in similar situations.

## Materials and Methods

Qualitative sociological methods have been used, with the focus on semi-structured interviews on a sample of patients and orthopedic surgeons, and social media listening. We used a multi-channel approach to the sample recruitment (including Facebook groups of patients) while keeping to the privacy requirements.

## Results\*

Recurrent emotions as sadness, uncertainty, helplessness, but also hope, were revealed. Some of them were triggered by the waiting status and the restrictions of the lockdown. For some, however, the commonality of the lockdown as a frustrating factor for all reduced the individual suffering.

## Discussion/Conclusion

Understanding patients' perception of both their own state of health and the uncertainty of the situation might help improve the decision-making in public health, hence benefiting the quality of the care services. The study can be scaled up and thus give representative results.

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\* Results are intermediate as by the moment of abstract submission the study is ongoing, to be finished by September 2021.