



Opinion

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COVID-19 and Cancer



Meher Binte Ali* and Danish Mahmud Jilani

Dow Medical College, Dow University of Health Sciences, Pakistan

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*Corresponding author: Meher Binte Ali, Dow Medical College, Dow University of Health Sciences, Baba-e- Urdu Road, Saddar Town, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

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Opinion

As another year of the COVID pandemic passes by, it is imperative to see how COVID-19 has affected the field of oncology. Not only has cancer diagnosis and management been affected, but cancer patients have suffered considerably too. Cancer patients are among the most susceptible to acquiring the infection, due to decreased immunity from the tumor and different treatment modalities. They also have increased morbidity and mortality from the infection, especially those with hematological malignancies, compared to the general population [1]. For patients needing surgery, a dilemma is the optimal time to schedule the surgery. A study showed an increased risk of postoperative complications like pneumonia, respiratory failure, sepsis, and pulmonary embolism in those whom elective surgery was performed within the first 8 weeks after COVID infection [2]. As a whole, cancer diagnosis and screening have decreased during the pandemic [3]. For cancer management, even though inpatient admissions decreased, outpatient chemotherapy sessions were not significantly affected [4].

Due to the reluctance of patients to go to hospitals and clinics during the rise of COVID cases, telemedicine services were started in various oncology centers throughout the world. There have been mixed reviews from patients regarding the substitution of conservative consultations with telemedicine; and it remains to be seen whether this innovation will be widely accepted soon [4,5]. A great turning point in the COVID pandemic has been the introduction of vaccines against COVID. Although vaccination decreases rates of infection in cancer patients, the decrease is lower than the general population, particularly among patients who have undergone recent chemotherapy or have a

hematological malignancy [6]. Studies have shown that booster doses increase rates of seroconversion among those previously nonimmune in spite of being vaccinated [7]. As COVID continues to spread, it is to be seen how oncology and cancer patients adapt to the changes. Meanwhile we must focus on cancer screening and not neglect this important means of detecting cancer early. Cancer patients should be encouraged to be vaccinated to decrease risk of COVID and its complications. For those already affected, cancer management should be tailored according to the severity of the infection.

Ethical Statement

Our study did not require an ethical board approval because it did not contain human or animal trials.

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