

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PEDIATRIC SURGERY

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INTRODUCTION: The pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has led to an unprecedented situation, with population lockdowns, congestion of healthcare resources, cancellation of scheduled surgical activity, fear of contagion, and delays in patient care. The objective of this study was to analyze its impact on pediatric surgical activity at a reference healthcare facility.

MATERIAL AND METHODS: A comparative study of activity in the pediatric surgery environment at a Spanish reference healthcare facility was carried out. It included outpatient consultations, scheduled surgeries, and activity at the emergency department during the lockdown period in Spain (March-May 2020) vs. the same 2019 period. Number of consultations and surgeries, type of surgery performed and/or cancelled, and stage of the pathologies treated were collected.

RESULTS: A 98% decrease in scheduled surgeries, an 84% decrease in healthcare burden from the pediatric emergency department, a 55.24% decrease in urgent surgeries, an 82% decrease in outpatient activity at external consultations, and a 94% decrease in inter-hospital referrals, along with a 66% increase in urgent pathology severity, were found.

CONCLUSIONS: The COVID-19 pandemic cancelled virtually all pediatric surgery activity, which caused treatment delays in severe pathologies and increased morbidity in regular urgent procedures.