

Reduced incidence of treated end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in 2020 : a Covid-19 effect ?

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Objective,

The Covid-19 pandemic has been associated in Belgium in 2020 with a decrease in the diagnosis of new cases of several diseases among which cancer. We decided to study the topic of such an effect on treated ESRD using registry data.

Methods,

Twenty-five out of 26 centers participating to the registry have been able to enter and validate their data on incident patients in 2020 by march 15th 2021. We compared for these 25 centers the incidence observed in 2018, 2019 and 2020 of treated ESRD in yearly and monthly comparisons.

Results,

In 2018, 971 patients(pts) started their treatment for ESRD, 970 in 2019 and 892 in 2020 (-8%). That decrease in incidence was observed in 18 out of 25 centers. Monthly comparisons show that the decrease in incidence started already in march 2020. This decrease has been observed in all age groups, for all primary renal disease groups and was particularly important for the pre-emptive graft activity (14 pts in 2019, 8 pts in 2020. A lower number of pts have started a peritoneal dialysis program (10,7% in 2018, 9,9% in 2019 and 7,6% in 2020) or a home-dialysis program (1% in 2019 and 0,5 in 2020).

Conclusion,

Year 2020 has been associated with a 8% reduction in the incidence of treated ESRD. The closing of the transplant programs in the academic centers and of the outpatient visits in the vast majority of our hospitals has been associated in a delay of nephrological care that can explain the observations. Several centers have lost pre-ESRD patients due to sudden death at home. We do not yet know if a rebound effect can be expected in 2021

