

Organizational Challenges in the Italian Pediatric Onco-Hematology Units During COVID-19 Pandemia: A National Survey

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic is causing a global health emergency. Health systems are under extreme pressure because of the outbreak. Pediatric population seems to be less prone to develop a severe course of the disease. Still the information about COVID-19 infection and children affected by cancer are few. This survey aims to highlight preventive and control measures to manage COVID-19 infection in Italian Pediatric Oncology and Hematology Association (AIEOP) centers. **Procedure:** A multicentre, descriptive survey design was used. All the AIEOP centers were invited to complete an on-line survey. Data collection was performed between March 15, 2020 and April 15, 2020. **Results:** Thirty six out of 48 centers responded to the survey. All the centers implemented similar preventive measures in order to control the COVID-19 spread and 77.8% of centers have created structured pathways, specific protocols or procedures; 30% of centers reduced the number of inpatient beds and 90% outpatient activity. The prevalence data collected report 14 children positive and 35 healthcare professionals positive. **Conclusion:** COVID-19 is not spreading homogeneously in Italy and children are less infected. However, all the AIEOP centers showed preparedness and response actions to control the infection and to protect their own fragile patients. Patients and staff safety were maintained; services and clinical activities were sometimes adapted. It will be necessary to define new processes and new strategies to ensure safety and continuity of care to children affected by cancer, even in the future, when the lockdown will end, and new measures will be implemented.

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Abbreviation	Abbreviation
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
AIEOP	Italian Association of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
IT-MoH	Italian Ministry of Health
DH	Day Hospital
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SD	Standard Deviations
SIV	Study Initiation Visit
HSCT	Hematopoietic stem cell transplant
IBMDR	Italian Bone Marrow Donor Registry

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