

20. THE LEVEL OF HEALTH EDUCATION REGARDING THE ACUTE VIRAL RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS (AVRI) AND COVID-19 AMONG POPULATION

Author: Țurcan Victoria

Scientific adviser: Aliona Nastas, MD, Department of Preventive Medicine, Discipline of Epidemiology, *Nicolae Testemitanu* State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Republic of Moldova.

Introduction. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the entire globe and caused more than 230 million infections and around 5 million deaths, the medical system and the general population are becoming more and more concerned about targeting acute viral respiratory infections. As the situation worsened, it was a real challenge for medical workers to deal with the situation and there was a lot of speculation and false information, which did nothing but misinform people and cause mass panic.

Aim of study. It is to assess the level of knowledge, attitudes and perception (KAP) towards the acute viral respiratory infections (AVRI) and COVID-19 among the population.

Methods and materials. Cross-sectional study-based online surveys were performed. A web-survey was used due to the COVID-19 health crisis and the need to ensure contact distancing. The questionnaires were developed using the Google Forms Platform (Google LLC., Mountain View, CA, USA) to facilitate the completion and collection of data. Invitations were sent to people to participate in the study using social media.

Results. A total of 414 participants from 42 districts of the Republic of Moldova completed the survey within the study period. Most representation was from the urban areas, 234 (56,52%) followed by the rural areas, 180 (43,48%). Of the respondents, 317 (76,57%) were female, 95 (22,95%) were male and 2 (0,48%) were unspecified. The majority of respondents were 25-34 years old (42,00%). In total, 237 (57,25%) had an undergraduate degree, 61 (14,73%) graduate degree, 102 (24,63%) high school and middle school, 14 (3,38) college and below. Channels of information or updates on COVID-19 reported by respondents were majorly from medical staff (16,64%), mass media (12,99%), social media (11,74%), websites (10,85%), Ministry of Health (9,88%), scientific resources (9,52%), World Health Organization (5,6%), official press institutions (5,6%), friends (5,16%), relatives (4,72%), medical webinars (4,36%), from other sources (2,94%). Of all respondents, 56,71% were not vaccinated against influenza, 0,24% were vaccinated in 2015, 0,24% in 2018, 5,88% in 2020, 26,35% in 2021, 10,58% are undecided. Unvaccinated against COVID-19 are 35,99%, 8,21% are vaccinated with a single dose, 46,14% with both doses, 3,38% with booster dose, 6,04% are undecided and 0,24% will soon be vaccinated. When asked who is the source of infection with AVRI, 40,57% said carriers of viruses, 23,88% - the person with various clinical forms, 14,65% - medical workers, 11,94% - do not know, 4,75% - animals, 3,26% - birds, 0,81% - fish and 0,14% - none. When asked who is more likely to develop COVID-19: 26,94% said the elderly, 20,69% people with comorbidities, 20,58% - anyone, 18,75% medical staff, 5,39% - pregnant women, 3,88% - children, 2,16% - veterinarians, 1,08% pet owners, 0,22% - nonsense, 0,1% politicians, 0,1% - journalists, 0,11% nobody. Another proposed topic was about treatments for COVID-19: 52,18% answered the one offered by the family doctor, 18,6% with vitamins, 10,39% with antibiotics, 9,9% with antivirals, 2,66% with medicinal plants, 3,86% - none, 1,45% - according to the people who had the disease, 0,48% - strengthening the immunity, 0,24% with antimalarials, 0,24% - do not know. 64,25% agree that COVID-19 will be controlled successfully, 6,76% disagree, 28,51% do not know and 0,48% hope.

Conclusion. The study highlights the need for maximal utilisation of both social media and mass-media with participation of medical workers in disseminating health education evidence-based AVRI and COVID-19 information, correcting fake news and misconceptions. Also, health promotion strategies should be organised for all populations, especially among those who have had no previous education in the health and allied courses.