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Survey Study Describing Impacts of COVID-19 on Nontuberculous Mycobacterium Patients

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Keywords

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Abstract

Background

Nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) is a pulmonary infection that can cause chronic, debilitating disease, primarily affecting the elderly and women. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) poses disproportionate danger to this subset population with increased risk of long-term complications, hospitalizations, and even death. There are currently scant data reporting the experience of people with chronic respiratory diseases, such as NTM, in the pandemic era.

Method

This study utilized electronic surveys to prospectively collect information from eligible subjects diagnosed with NTM. Survey data are collected in REDCap, exported, and analyzed descriptively.

Objectives

To describe baseline characteristics, knowledge, and behavior changes in patients with NTM disease in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

Participants (n = 88) represented 51 states, mostly female (92%), ≥65 years (64.8%), and White (93.2%) with professional/graduate degrees (52.3%), living in houses or duplexes (73%). A majority (67%) were extremely concerned about COVID-19 with their underlying lung condition. News outlets (87.5%) and government websites (75%) were the main coronavirus information sources. An overwhelming number of responders avoided activities like seeing friends or family (92%), attending restaurants or events (96.6%), going to stores (84.1%), and doctor's office (62.5%). 66 (75%) are aware of physician's offices offering telephone or telemedicine encounters but only 40 (45.5%) completed a telephone or telemedicine encounter.

Discussion

Older adults and those with underlying lung disease have increased risk for severe illness, including death, from COVID-19. Our findings suggest that high-level education, infectious lung disease chronicity, and frequent medical visit experiences may have contributed to personal protective behavioral adjustments that align with official recommended safety guidelines. Continuing to communicate COVID-19 information through commonly utilized sources and uptake in telehealth services are strategies to keep this vulnerable population safe as the pandemic continues.