

Scientific Contributions of the Albanian Health Care Workers during COVID-19 Pandemic

Edmond Puca^{1*}, Entela Puca², Elda Qyra¹, Rozeta Kamberi¹, Monika Fida³

¹ Service of Infection Diseases, University Hospital Center, Tirana, Albania

² Service of Endocrinology, American Hospital, Tirana, Albania

³ Service of Dermatology, University Hospital Center, Tirana, Albania

Abstract

Background: The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a major impact on the world's health, economic and political systems. The scientific contribution during the pandemic has consisted not only on the treatment and custody of cases, but also for the dissemination of information and knowledge on this virus and pandemic.

Purpose: This paper aims to evince the scientific contribution of Albanian health care workers in national and international scientific journals.

Material and methods: Actually, a number of surveys are done in the official journal of the Medical Faculty (New Bulletin of Medical Sciences); the official journal of The Medical University of Tirana (Albanian Journal of Medical Health and Science), and the official

journal of the Albanian Institute of Public Health (Bulletin). PubMed, SCOPUS, Science Citation Index (SCI) research with the keywords: Sars-Cov2 infection; Covid-19; pandemic; Albania; was also done. The research/surveys covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 28 February 2022. In the research paper are included only references from the papers in the English language and the assessment of the first authors or co-authors of such papers.

Results: In the Albanian Journal of Medical Health and Science, only two papers are published. In the international journals indexed in PubMed, SCOPUS, Science Citation Index, 54 papers with the contribution of the Albanian authors were identified. Only in 24% of them (13 papers), the first author was working for Albanian

Address for correspondence: Edmond Puca*, Service of Infection Diseases, University Hospital Center, Tirana, Albania. Email: edmond_puca@yahoo.com

medical institutions. In the remaining 76% they were participants or co-authors of the research papers.

Conclusions: These are challenging times where the changes are so fast that it is difficult to understand everything. However, one thing remains certain; the need for scientific information is incessant. Science is essential in fighting and controlling the spreading of infectious diseases.

Keywords: Sars-Cov2 infection; Covid-19; pandemic; Albania, published paper

INTRODUCTION

The initial cases of Covid-19 appeared by the end of 2019 in Wuhan, China. After a period of some weeks, other countries started to report the presence of positive cases with SARS-Cov-2 infection (1). From the moment of the spread of initial cases in Wuhan, China, up-to-date confirmed cases of COVID-19 have passed 435.4 million globally and the confirmed deaths has passed 5.94 million (2). The first case in Albania was reported on 8 March 2020 (1). Clinical and non-clinical physicians/doctors made all efforts that, in addition to managing the spreading of the infection, diagnosis and treatment of patients, they provided to each other and to the general public the necessary information and actively participated in the public debates regarding the manner of managing of SAR-Cov-2 infections and pandemic. Up to date, thousands of papers have been published, both in English and local languages, in scientific and non-scientific journals. Actually, from the pandemic beginning till now, more than 240,000 papers have been published in PubMed for this topic. It is the case to be pointed out that doctors have occupied an important share of the mass media. Systematic studies and meta-analyses represent a high level of scientific evidence for a structured research method with critical evaluations that limit prejudices and achieve a summarized conclusion. In this paper, we aimed to collect all Albanian published scientific articles concerning COVID-19 infection and pandemic, in order to better identify the available evidences, highlight the

knowledge gaps and draw conclusions for the future.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We have extracted the publications related to the epidemiologic evaluation, prevention, management, testing, analysis, and findings of COVID-19 and the pandemic. In addition, we have consulted the full-text COVID-19 related research papers in English in the database, including those published in Albanian journals and PubMed, SCOPUS, Science Citation Index. We focused on the extraction of research papers and findings published during 1 January 2020 to 28 February 2022. The combination of different keywords such as: Sars-Cov-2 infection; Covid-19; pandemic; Albania; was formulated for this purpose. After the papers were reviewed, they were subsequently categorized into papers on clinical symptoms, epidemiology, diagnosis, specific populations, and treatment. Afterwards, the papers were subdivided according to the following groups: a) publications where the Albanian authors were part of the international teams; b) publications where the Albanian authors were the first authors; and c) publications according to fields or specialties. Abstracts were not taken into consideration.

RESULTS

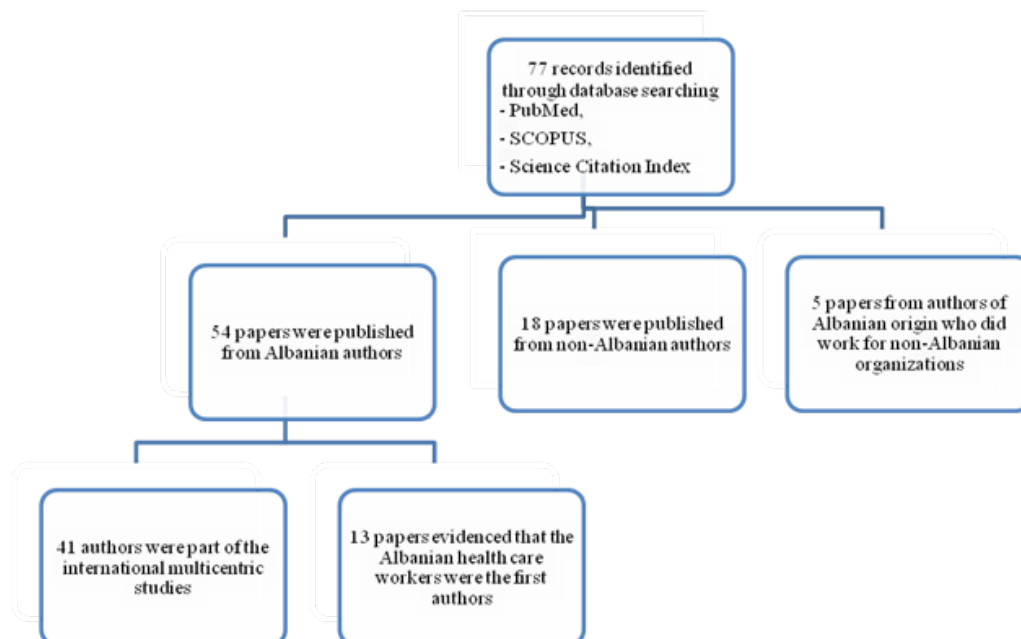
Based on our research resulted that only two papers were published in The Albanian Journal of Medical Health and Science, which is the official journal of University of Medicine, Tirana, while

in the journals of the Medical Faculty (New Bulletin of Medical Sciences) and Institute of Public Health (Bulletin) not any research papers from the Albanian authors regarding the given topic were found (3,4).

In PubMed, SCOPUS, Science Citation Index, from 77 publications that appeared in total, the publications where although a key word was mentioned, no contribution from the Albanian authors was provided, were taken out. This category resulted in 18 publications. Then, 5 other publications from authors of Albanian origin who did work for non-Albanian organizations, although one of the addresses of authors was that of country of origin (Albania), but not an Albanian institution. In 41 publications the Albanian authors were part of the international multicentric studies (5–45). In 13 publications, it was evidenced that the Albanian health

care workers were the first authors (1,46–57).

From 54 publications where the Albanian authors did participate, 15 of them were in the field of public health and vaccinology, 10 papers in sciences of neuro-psychiatry and mental health, 8 papers were from the service of infection diseases, 5 papers were from the orthodontic field and 3 papers from the sphere of pharmacotherapy and treatment and pneumology. Other papers included 2 from the sphere of dermatology, cardiology, endocrinology and oncology, followed by one publication in surgery and hepatology.



DISCUSSION

Scientific contribution is an important element in the dissemination of knowledge and experiences. While COVID – 19 continues to affect every part of life worldwide, it is extremely important to understand the role of science and have well-informed health care workers. In modern times, we have never seen such an overwhelming demonstration of the need for scientific information (58). Scientific publications with respect to Sars-Cov-2 pandemic have been immensely large. This was one of the periods when the research papers were immediately published with the aim of spreading as soon as possible of the information. However, the same thing was not noticed in the Albanian journals from the Albanian health care workers (3,4). During the period subject of our study, only two papers were published, which are very few compared to the international literature. The reasons for this may be numerous. Maybe the medical staffs were engaged and physically and psychologically overloaded? Or do many of them prefer to publish their publications in higher-indexed journals? Or a part of them has no interest at all in making publications. A question arises obviously on how our experience will be transmitted and disseminated to future generations. Clinical doctors, in addition to medical treatment and management must disseminate scientific information. This is the only way to move forward.

Also, the number of publications in the international journals published in PubMed is not

considerable. A great part of the publications was made by foreign authors where the Albanian health care workers are part of the team and only in 13 papers, they were first authors. Even in this case, as it was previously mentioned, the papers published in the international journals are missing, although the clinical cases and problematics were numerous. It appears that most of the publications are in the sphere of public health and vaccinology. An important topic is the sphere of neuro-psychiatry which is represented by 12 papers, which demonstrates the actual neuro-psychiatric problematic (10,47,48,52,53). Spontaneously a question arises, why so little scientific contribution? Maybe the clinical doctors do not have the experience and possibility to disseminate their knowledge and information or this comes from the lack of professional skills, or worse the Albanian health care workers do not consider necessary scientific publications, because they not see any benefits to write scientific paper. Therefore, maybe this paper will not be read, but the leaders of the University of Medicine, Medical Faculty and other links need to find reasons to be more attractive for health care workers.

As a conclusion we may say that these are challenging times where the changes are so fast that it is difficult to understand everything. However, one thing remains certain; the need for scientific information is incessant. Science is essential in fighting and controlling the spreading of infectious diseases. This is the reason why the science itself evolves: we are here to inspire

students, post-graduated medical students, future generations of scientists, colleagues, researchers and innovators, who will help us to overcome the challenges similar to this we are facing today.

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