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„Glaucoma self - care habits and psychological status changes during the COVID-19 pandemic: the patient's perspective”

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Introduction: COVID-19 pandemic has made a major challenge for healthcare centers. Some studies verified the impact of lockdown on ophthalmology services and patients concerns about treatment due to changes in hospital work, delayed or non-contact consultations. We conducted a study to assess how personal glaucoma self - care habits and psychological status changed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Lithuania from the patient's point of view.

Material and methods: The study was conducted using an original anonymous questionnaire to find out the data about patients glaucoma self-care and the psychological condition before and during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Patients, diagnosed with glaucoma, were interviewed at the Center of Eye Diseases (Vilnius University hospital Santaros Clinics) in February - March 2021. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed using MS Excel.

Results: 68 patients (64.7% females, 35.3% males; age from 49 to 90 years) were interviewed. 94.12% patients visited an ophthalmologist during the pandemic. The availability of prescribed glaucoma medications was the same as usual for 76.5% of respondents, 13.2% got prescriptions from general practitioners more often, 5.9% had more trouble getting prescription medication. The majority of patients reported no change in their habits of buying and taking glaucoma medications (83.7% and 94.1%, respectively). Support from relatives in glaucoma care increased in 16% of patients. The psychological condition related to glaucoma had deteriorated for 45.6% of respondents, 13% of respondents felt tension over a failed visit to the doctor. 10% of respondents were not satisfied with the teleconsultation of the ophthalmologist.

Conclusions: The routine and medication habits of the patients diagnosed with glaucoma did not change significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anxiety due to glaucoma increased in nearly half of the patients.