



CHALLENGES IN THE REHABILITATION OF COVID POSITIVE NEUROLOGICAL PATIENTS

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Abstract

Introduction. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the accessibility and quality of medical care, in addition to its psychological repercussions on both patients and medical personnel.

Material and method. Neurorehabilitation comprises a wide and varied approach including electrotherapy, massage therapy and physical therapy, as well as pharmacological treatment. The COVID-19 pandemic has made rehabilitation of neurological patients challenging for several reasons:

1. The use of telemedicine has greatly increased, in some situations completely replacing outpatient care. It ensures the safety of both patients and medical staff; however, this option severely limits the extent of the therapy per se, because it requires physical contact between patient and caregiver.

2. Hospitalized, COVID positive neurological patients requiring rehabilitation therapy are even more difficult to treat due to numerous factors, including the following:

- o Personal protective equipment (PPE) prevents medical staff from freely interacting with patients (this is especially an issue in the case of massage therapy)

- o Electrotherapy equipment is not applicable in covid red zone

- o Physical therapy may be restricted by patients' dependence on oxygen and further limitations may arise from the specific neurological issues and level of consciousness of the patient.

Conclusions. Studies have shown that bedridden patients may benefit greatly from physical therapy, especially early mobilization, which prevents excessive muscular hypotrophy and improves post-hospitalization quality of life. Therefore, despite the previously mentioned limitations, neurorehabilitation in the form of bedside physical therapy could still help preserve muscle strength and functionality in stroke patients hospitalized for COVID-19 infection.

The physical and emotional impact which the COVID-19 pandemic has had on both patients and medical staff is impossible to quantify. It is important to study the associated shortcomings pertaining to healthcare, in order to establish alternative procedures to accommodate similar situations more effectively in the future.

Keywords: COVID-19, COVID positive neurological patients, physical therapy