Initial Impact and Operational Response of Radiation Oncology Practices to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States, Europe, and Latin America

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Disclosures

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Background & Method

• The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed practice patterns in medicine around the world. The full impact on radiation oncology is unknown.

• We surveyed radiation oncology practice leaders from the United States, Europe and Latin America to gauge initial impact and immediate operational responses to the pandemic.

• Surveys were administered April 16 - May 30, 2020 by the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO; US survey), the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO; European survey), and Rayos Contra Cancer (Latin American survey)

• 474 of 1,246 practice leaders responded → 38% response rate
45 nations represented
USA

222/517 (43%) practices
43 states
Europe

139/500 (28%) practices
29 nations
Latin America

115/229 (50%) practices

15 nations
Clinics Stayed Open

• Nearly all radiation therapy practices reported uninterrupted operation in the early months of the pandemic.
Patient Volumes Dropped

Average treatment volumes were reduced from pre-pandemic levels by varying degrees.

- 68% (32% decrease)
- 75% (25% decrease)
- 59% (41% decrease)
Treatment Postponed for Low-Risk Disease

Postponement of radiation therapy for low-risk patients was widely adopted across centers.

92% 65% 60%
Practice Revenues Fell

Many practices estimated reductions in revenue greater than 20% due to the pandemic.

71% 25% 53%
Widespread Adoption of Safety Protocols

Nearly all practices implemented new formal safety procedures to protect patients and staff from infections.

98% 95% 97%
Practices Experienced Staffing Shortages

Staffing shortages were reported across centers:

- 70%
- 57%
- 52%
Practices Experienced PPE Shortages

PPE shortages were reported across centers:

- 69%
- 48%
- 51%
Practices Adopted Telemedicine

First-time adoption of telemedicine programs was widespread:

89% 76% 64%
Conclusions

• Surveyed impact of the early COVID-19 pandemic on radiation oncology practices across the US, Europe, and Latin America was substantial.

• Despite staffing shortfalls, safety supply deficits, and financial instability, practices across these regions demonstrated resilience, quickly adopting safety recommendations and leveraging new telemedicine programs to facilitate prioritized treatment continuity.

• Treatment access policies reflected rapidly published international guidelines to delay treatment for low-risk diagnoses.

• Patients with higher risk disease continued to receive uninterrupted access to cancer care.
Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on practice in European radiation oncology centers

Berend J. Slotman, Yolande Lievens, Philip Poortmans, Valerie Cremades, Thomas Eichler, Daniel Victor Wakefield, Umberto Ricardi

COVID’s Impact on Radiation Oncology: A Latin American Survey Study

David Martinez, Gustavo J. Sarria, Daniel Wakefield, Claudio Flores, Sameeksha Malhotra, Benjamin Li, Michael Ehrmann, David L. Schwartz, and Gustavo R. Sarria