

An online survey among health care professionals about end-of-life care for patients dying during the first and the second wave of the pandemic of COVID-19: The CO-LIVE study - Czech national data

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BACKGROUND

COVID-19 has caused an ongoing pandemic crisis and it has a great impact on health care worldwide. The situation in the Czech Republic was well controlled at the first wave of COVID-19 because of strict restrictions but it got worse during the second wave.

AIM

The aim of this study was to compare the impact of the pandemic of COVID-19 on end-of-life care during the first and the second wave.

METHODS

This study was an online questionnaire survey to assess experiences of end-of-life care during the COVID-19 pandemic among health care professionals providing care for dying patients either with or without COVID-19 during the first wave (March 2020 - May 2020) and the second wave (October 2020 - April 2021). This study was a part of iLive project (<https://www.iliveproject.eu>). Data were collected online using snowball and convenience sampling using dissemination through relevant health care professional organisations and personal contact. The questionnaire was an abbreviated version of the international Care Of the Dying Evaluation (iCODE) questionnaire with additional questions about the impact of COVID-19. The differences between the first and the second wave were compared using Cramer's V.

RESULTS

136 health care professionals completed the survey at the first wave and 163 at the second wave, most of them were nurses (61 % and 82 %). Results from both surveys did not differ regarding nursing care which was considered sufficient (88 % vs 89 %), as well as medical care (72 % vs 71 %). In both samples, only few of professionals (10 % vs 12 %) thought that end-of-life care had to be limited because of the pandemic. In the second wave, there was a significant decrease in the reported level of comfort provided for patients ($p= 0.008$) and in the level of emotional and informational support for family carers ($p= 0.001$).

During the second wave the health care staff less often adequately explained relatives the patients' condition (0.04) a less often allowed them to assist in laying out body ($p<0.001$). Significantly fewer professionals thought that their patients died at the right place (64 % vs 49 %).

DISCUSSION

This study shows that although the medical aspect of end-of-life care might have not been affected during the pandemic, psychosocial care has been affected. This finding might have a long-lasting impact on relatives and their bereavement, as well as on professionals.

