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Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer care in 2020 and 2021 in a Brazilian healthcare center

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Objective: The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the care of cancer patients in the years 2020 and 2021 compared with the pre-pandemic period in the oncology service of the Hospital das Clínicas of the Universidade Federal de Goiás. **Methodology:** This is an observational, analytical, and cross-sectional study that was carried out by collecting data from medical records and the Internal Regulation Center database. The periods of time evaluated during the pandemic were March to May 2020 and March to May 2021. Data from these periods were compared with data from March to May 2019, a period that preceded the pandemic. The association between patients' vital status and age group, sex, tumor, treatment, and staging was analyzed using Pearson's chi-square test followed by the analysis of standardized residuals whenever statistically significant differences were found. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 26.0. The significance level was set at 5% ($p < 0.05$). **Results:** Compared with the pre-pandemic period, there was an increase in patient visits of 11.0% and 6.5% in 2020 and 2021, respectively. However, there was a reduction in new cases of 44.7% and 57.5% in 2020 and 2021, respectively, and these differences were statistically significant ($p = 0.04$). Regarding indications for intravenous or oral therapy, a statistically significant difference was found compared with the pre-pandemic period only for the second period of the pandemic studied (2021), with a more than twofold increase in the prescription of oral therapy and a consequent reduction in intravenous therapy. **Conclusion:** This observational study allowed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to be evaluated over two different periods (2020 and 2021), with results showing a significant reduction in the number of new cases seen in the cancer center of this institute due to restrictions in the services provided including a variety of medical specialties, screening tests, and elective surgery, in addition to the fact that admissions to hospital focused on patients infected with the virus. These data confirm the implications of access to treatment for cancer patients during the pandemic.

Keywords: breast cancer; pandemics; coronavirus.