Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activity of private medical practices in Morocco

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September 24, 2020

Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activity of private medical practices in Morocco. Methods: An online survey was carried out in June 2020. The study population consisted of physicians (General practitioners and specialists) who run private practices in different regions of Morocco. The questionnaire comprised 3 sections: demographic and professional data, the impact noticed by the doctors and the strategies adopted to tackle this impact. Results: We analyzed 225 responses. Specialists represented 71.6% of the respondents. The majority (94.2%) of the private practices were located in urban areas. Almost all respondents have noticed a change in the demand for medical services, mainly a decrease (96,44%). There was an increase in urgent consultations (30.7%) and consultations for acute motives (39.1%). Respondents also reported less (69,3%) or no (23,1%) regular follow-up visits for patients with chronic diseases. Decreased incomes concerned 97,33% of the practices. Doctors reacted by working less hours (87,55%), delaying some procedures (78,22%), and applying recommended safety measures (100%). Telemedicine was used in an informal way to facilitate the communication with patients. Discussion and conclusion: During this pandemic, private practices were challenged to contribute to the continuity of healthcare services while ensuring the safety of the staff and the patients. Several strategies were adopted to cope with the new situation and to survive its many challenges.

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