**Título:** PERCEIVED STRESS AND SAFETY IN PATIENTS SUBMITTED TO SURGICAL PROCEDURES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Resumo:**

Introduction: COVID-19 pandemic is a major health crisis with serious mental health impact. After the first wave, all hospitals reliably resume surgical activity, but the psychological burden of patients with no COVID-related conditions requiring surgical treatment is an important topic not yet published. This study reveals the impact of COVID-19 pandemic concerning traumatic stress in patients undergoing surgery and their demographic and clinical differences, during coronavirus second wave (from October 2020 to January 2021).   
Methods: A survey-based cross-sectional study was conducted. Patients over 18 years old were asked to complete a questionnaire before hospital admission. Traumatic stress due to COVID-19 was measured using the Portuguese validated scales - Perceived Stress Scale 10 (PSS-10), Impact of Event Scale 6 (IES-6) – and researcher-developed questions. Both scales showed appropriate internal consistency (Cronbach's α = 0.82 and 0.75 for PSS-10 and IES-6, respectively). The data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. For demographic analysis, patients were divided into two groups: “Stressed” and “Nonstressed”, based on PSS-10 score (> 14). Statistical associations were assessed by chi-square; means were compared using t-tests. P-values of less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. This study was approved by the local Ethics Committee.   
Results: Of the 80 respondents who met criteria for further analysis (n=80), 74% had moderate to severe stress (PSS-10 score > 14). A significant percentage of patients among the Stressed Group met criteria for PTSD (OR=1.52; CI 95% [0.49;4.8]. Stress was influenced by sex, education level and inpatient care (table 1). Age, marital status, children, and employment status were not significantly correlated with stress. Up to 60% of patients feared being infected during hospital stay. Anxiety insight due to COVID-19 was significantly higher in patients requiring hospitalization (mean 3.1 ± SD 1.0 vs 2.3 ± 1.25; p < 0.05). The negative impact of visits suspension tended to be greater in hospitalized vs ambulatory patients (mean 3.04 ± 1.28 vs 2.4 ± 1.2; p= 0.056). Ambulatory patients considered more frequently the operating room as a safe place than inpatients (mean 4.1 ± SD 0.8 vs 3.5 ± 1.1; p < 0.05).  
Discussion/Conclusion: As far as we know, this is the first study evaluating stress in non-covid patients undergoing elective surgical procedures. This study identifies critical levels of stress, particularly in women and less educated patients requiring hospitalization. It also reveals the essential role of the anesthesiologist in terms of safety and quietness of patients. The authors also consider of utmost importance to correctly inform the patients to restore their confidence in health systems.  Larger samples and more robust studies are needed to corroborate and expand these findings.

