



Hospital Garcia de Orta

PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES  
HOSPITAL GARCIA DE ORTA

# EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY ADHERENCE

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## BACKGROUND and IMPORTANCE

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many patients avoided moving from their homes, even to get essential drugs, such as antiretroviral therapy (ART). High adherence (more than 95%) is essential to acquire viral suppression and is associated with reduced mortality and morbidity. Furthermore, bad ART adherence is the first cause of therapeutic failure in HIV patients and HIV drug resistant strains.

## AIM and OBJECTIVES

Evaluation and characterization of the effect of COVID-19 pandemic in adherence to ART and identify the main factors that influenced adherence during pandemic.

## MATERIAL and METHODS

Retrospective transversal comparative study over the first semester of 2019 and 2020. HIV patients with adherence related problems were included. Exclusion criteria: deaths, initiated ART during or after the 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2019 and transfer to another hospital. To measure adherence, dispensing records were analysed. Registered variables were sex, risk factors that could compromise adherence and pill numbers. Data was obtained electronic medical records. For the statistical analysis, the paired t test was used to determine if there were differences in the patients' adherence before and after COVID-19 pandemic.

## RESULTS

A total of 100 patients were analysed during the study period.

39% Female 61% Male Average age of 48.9±12.3 years

2019

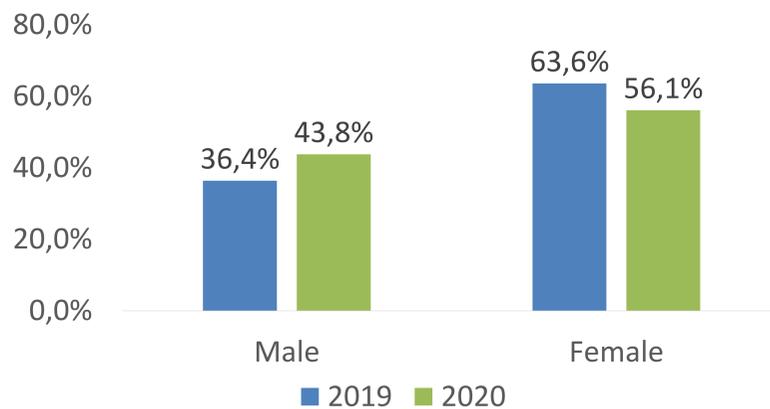
67% ART Adherence

24% decrease in the adherence rate

p-value=0,006

2020

43% ART Adherence



Graphic 1 – Characterization of non-adherent patients by gender, in the year of 2019 (n=33) and 2020 (n=57)

The main reasons for this reduction were:

- ❖ Reschedule doctor appointments;
- ❖ Reschedule mand blood tests;
- ❖ Mandatory confinement due to COVID-19;
- ❖ Fear of going to hospital facilities.

## CONCLUSION and RELEVANCE

The study results suggest that COVID-19 pandemic affected HIV patient's adherence. So it's important that hospital pharmacists promote therapeutic adherence and promote health education about COVID-19. The main limitation of the study was the reduced sample used. It is highly important to monitor patients with ART to ensure their adherence rate and to understand how and why COVID-19 pandemic affected their treatment. Further research is needed to know the real impact of COVID-19 pandemic in health of HIV patients.

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