



COVID-19: AN OTORHINOLARYNGOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Background and Purpose: The otorhinolaryngological manifestations of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) are not much emphasized in the clinical features of COVID-19. Otolaryngologists are at great risk of getting infected with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) while they are managing COVID-19 patients in OPD and/or OR settings. The aim and objective for conducting this study were: (a) to analyze the status of ear, nose, and throat (E.N.T.) symptoms and their significance in the diagnosis of COVID-19; and (2) to highlight the evolving best-practice safety recommendations for otolaryngologists while managing COVID-19 patients.

Methods: Searching PubMed and Web of Science electronic databases.

Results: The most common symptoms of COVID-19 found were fever, cough, fatigue, and short breath. Common E.N.T. manifestations observed were rhinorrhea, nasal congestion, and sore throat. The E.N.T. symptoms which were observed during the asymptomatic phase of the disease were dysfunctions of smell and taste sensations. The otolaryngologists were found at higher occupational risk of contracting COVID-19 than other physicians. The personal protective equipment (PPE) for E.N.T. surgeon is required while they are treating unknown, suspected, or positive COVID-19 patients.

Conclusion: The common E.N.T. clinical features which are not specific for Covid-19 patients are rhinorrhea, nasal congestion, and sore throat. The E.N.T. manifestations which could be specific and indicators of Covid-19 and present when the patients are asymptomatic, are dysfunctions of olfactory and taste sensations. The olfactory and gustative dysfunctions could be the only and presenting symptoms of COVID-19. Otolaryngologists are at great risk of occupational exposure due to their close contact with the patients during their management and are among the most affected healthcare providers. E.N.T. surgeons should maintain high suspicion in asymptomatic patients. Protective strategies such as restriction of nonurgent visits and surgeries, personal protective equipment (PPE), pre-appointment screening, telemedicine and triaging should be implemented.

Keywords: COVID-19; SARS-CoV-2; nasal congestion; sore throat; ageusia; anosmia; rhinorrhea; coronavirus; safety precautions; PPE; otolaryngology; aerosol

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