

Clinical description and outcome of patients admitted in the MSF COVID-19 treatment centre, Herat, Afghanistan

Elisabeth Poulet, Epicentre, Paris

Background

On 24/02/2020, the 1st COVID-19 confirmed case of Afghanistan was reported in Herat. As part of the COVID-19 response, in support to the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, MSF set up a COVID-19 treatment centre (CTC) that admitted patients over two periods of similar duration (July-Sept. 2020 and Dec-2nd March 2021).

Methods

Routinely collected monitoring data were entered into a clinical database dedicated to COVID-19. We described sociodemographic, and clinical data including comorbidity and complications, treatment, and patients' outcome data.

Results

Overall, 517 (205 in 1st wave – 312 in 2nd wave) patients were admitted, 60% were female and median age was 60 years old. PCR COVID-19 testing was positive in 46% (213/460) of the patients. Most patients reported cough, dyspnea, and fever and 24% ageusia and 18% anosmia. Two thirds of the patients reported one or more comorbidities, mainly high blood pressure and chronic lung disease. Fifty percent of patients of the first wave and 96% of the second wave were clinically assessed as severe.

Two thirds of the patients received simple oxygen therapy. Fewer patients developed complications in the 2nd wave (3%) as compared to the 1st wave (13%). The most frequently reported complications were pneumonia, respiratory and heart failure. Most patients were discharged home in similar proportions in both waves (76% and 81%). Overall, 8 patients died in the treatment centre. Fewer patients were transferred during the 2nd wave (13% vs 7%).

Conclusion

Compared to the first wave, the number of patients admitted during the second wave increased by more than 50% and the proportion of severe patients doubled. Despite these increases, the proportion of patients discharged home was high for both periods, fewer complications were reported, and fewer patients were transferred to the intensive care unit.

Routinely collected COVID-19 monitoring data show satisfactory treatment results despite a significant increase in the number of patients and severe patients during the 2nd wave.