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ASSOCIAZIONE EUROPEA DEI MEDICI OSPEDALIERI
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ΕΒΡΟΠΕΪΣΚΑ ΑΣΟCΙΑCΙΑ ΗΑ ΣΤΑΡΣΗΤΕ ΒΟΛΗΙΧΝΗ ΛΕΚΑΡΗ
ASOCIAȚIA EUROPEANĂ A MEDICILOR DIN SPITALE**

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2021 AEMH SPANISH NATIONAL REPORT

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DATA SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC

- The coronavirus epidemic in Spain has now exceeded 3.5 million infections and 78,000 deaths.

COLLAPSE OF THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

- During the first wave, the uncertainty, lack of foresight in PPEs and shortage of diagnostic tests led to the collapse of hospitals, especially in some regions. Seven Autonomous Communities (Madrid, Catalonia, Aragon, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, the Basque Country and La Rioja) exceeded their pre-pandemic ICU capacity. All these regions were forced to expand, in some cases (Madrid and Catalonia), even tripling their capacity to cope with COVID-19.
- During this first wave, mortality was higher than in subsequent waves, with more than 900 deaths per day on several occasions.
- The following waves, despite presenting a greater number of positive cases due to the greater testing capacity, have not reached these levels of saturation or mortality. We were better prepared, with best planned circuits that have allowed in many cases to adapt admission beds and ICU beds to the demand.

FOURTH WAVE

- According to data from the Ministry of Health, the fourth wave has had a lesser impact than previous waves. An example of this is the cumulative incidence (CI), the number of cases per 100,000 inhabitants recorded in the last 14 days.
- In the second wave, CI exceeded 500, and in the third wave, it was close to 900, with many Autonomous Communities well over 1,000.
- CI now stands at 223 (as of 3 May) and falling, after reaching what looks like the peak of the fourth wave with 235 cases per 100,000 population a few days ago. April started with 154 CI in the run-up to this fourth wave.



- The speed of virus transmission in Spain is currently less than one.
- The number of ICU beds currently occupied by COVID patients is 23.1% , a high risk level according to the Government. Although this is far from the peak of 45 % during the third wave, it is still close to 25 %, which indicates a extreme danger. In total, nine communities are above this level (Madrid, Castilla-León, La Rioja, the Basque Country, Navarre, Aragón and Catalonia). The situation is much more favourable in Galicia, Extremadura, the Valencian Community, the Balearic Islands and Murcia, all of which are below 10%.

VACCINATION

- Experts impute the mildness of this wave, which is currently in a mesetastic phase, to vaccination and the maintenance of social restrictions in a large part of the country.
- On 3 May, the milestone of 5 million people with both doses was reached, representing more than 10% of the population. As of 3 May, 17,130,598 doses of Covid-19 vaccine have been administered.
- However, with only 25.6% of the population having received at least one dose (especially in the higher age groups), we are still far from herd immunity. We have called for a particularly rapid vaccination of over 60 years old population, as the overload of hospital care is mainly in this age range.
- April has been a key month and all hopes are pinned on vaccination going even faster in May. The Minister of Health, Ms. Carolina Darias, was optimistic. It is expected that Spain will receive around 42 million doses in the second quarter of the year, which would make it possible to immunise around 24 million people, according to the Government's calculations.
- 100 % of people over 80 already have at least one dose, a target that came a month later than planned by the Government. In addition, immunisation through vaccination now reaches one in ten people - more than four million. And there is a new record for vaccine administration: more than half a million in a single day. According to the Ministry of Health's Vaccination Register, 92% of the doses in Spain belong to Pfizer and BioNTech, 4% to Moderna and another 4% to Oxford and AstraZeneca. Janssen's doses should be added in April.

CONCERNS

- We are concerned about the variants of the virus, at the present time the Indian variant, whose greater capacity for contagion and mortality seems already evident, is starting to enter in Spain.



- We are still concerned about the health of non-covid patients, as many patients have had their visits or surgeries postponed.
- Healthcare professionals are tired and exhausted. 51% of professionals say they feel "overwhelmed" and less prepared physically and emotionally. This is reflected in the study "Repercussions of COVID-19 on the health and professional practice of doctors in Spain".
- Royal Decree on Cross-training in Health Sciences.
- As the name of the project indicates, it will regulate the transversal training of health specialities, as well as "the procedure and criteria for the creation and revision of specialist qualifications in health sciences and specific training area diplomas; access and training in specific training areas". It also lays down "the rules applicable to the annual tests for accessing training posts (MIR)".
- The draft was sent to public consultation, during which it received 335 contributions, 172 of them from private individuals. Now, during the hearing and public information process, the Ministry of Health hopes to obtain reports from the various professional associations. Finally, the process will culminate with the request for the mandatory reports from the Interterritorial Council, the Human Resources Commission, the National Specialities Council, the National Disability Council and various Ministries. The last step will be its submission to the Council of State and the rest of the scientific associations and societies".
- Regarding training, the regulation stresses "the importance of acquiring a series of common competencies for the professional practice of specialists". In fact, it considers it "fundamental" to guarantee that "they acquire, and maintain throughout their professional practice, a set of transversal competencies that are essential for the provision of quality, efficient and safe healthcare for the patient".
- This project stipulates that, to create a new training qualification it is compulsory that it "responds to criteria such as the health needs of the population or the evolution of the scientific and technological knowledge, avoiding the fragmentation of the professionals training and the healthcare as a result of the creation of specialist qualifications or specific training area diplomas".
- On the other hand, the Royal Decree updates the regulations governing entrance examinations for specialised health training posts, "maintaining the general characteristics of these examinations and, consequently, their high



degree of social acceptance". However, it confirms, for example, that both the choice and the awarding of posts will be carried out electronically.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION IN SPANISH MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Doctors are, along with nurses, the group of professionals who have suffered the most from deterioration in their personal, family and work lives in the form of infections or direct contact with infected people, isolation from the family, sick leave or hospitalizations of their own and of colleagues due to direct contact with Covid-19 in the workplace. These are some of the conclusions that can be extracted from the study "Repercussions of COVID-19 on the health and exercise of the medical profession in Spain" carried out by the Galatea Foundation, the Collegiate Medical Organization (OMC), the Barcelona Medical Association and Mutual Médica and the professors Núria Mas, from IESE Business School and Judit Vall, from the Institut d'Economia de Barcelona (IEB-UB), with the participation of 4,515 Spanish doctors and which shows the following results:¹

State of health

- Doctors report a clear worsening of their self-perceived health condition (the share of those with regular or bad health has increased from 6.9% to 23.2%), an increase of those who sleep less than 6 hours per day (14% to 27%) and those who appear to have trouble falling asleep or who wake up spontaneously in the middle of the night (9.4% to 45% during the worst time of the crisis and 33% at the time the survey was carried out).
- Six out of ten doctors have some indicator of fatigue, pain and/or stress even after the worst moment of the crisis, twice as much as there was before.
- Similarly, six out of ten doctors suffer from burnout syndrome, a form of stress that is chronicled and that takes place in the form of both personal and professional (specially in their relationship with patients) tiredness and exhaustion. Since the beginning of the crisis, this syndrome has doubled (it only affected three out of ten doctors).

¹ The survey was conducted during two different period of time, hence, when the incidence of COVID was at different stages. Surveys conducted in Catalonia were answered during the month of July, when the toughest phase of the first wave had passed and health professionals were relatively clear of COVID cases. On the other hand, surveys conducted throughout Spain were answered between October and December, coinciding with the increase in COVID cases for a second and, in part, third wave.

- When comparing the numbers before and after the worst moments of the crisis, the percentage of doctors who feel overwhelmed, have the feeling of “no longer being able to carry on” or feel burned out by work, triples and gets to affect almost half of the professionals. Those who feel burned out or overwhelmed by work have a worse self-perceived health condition.
- Finally, the consumption of tranquilizers or hypnotics has also increased between the beginning of the pandemic (18.6%) and the moment they answer the survey (29.4%).
- In most cases, women, primary care professionals and those with interim or temporary contracts have the worst health indicators, although they are generally very cross-cutting situations.

Lifestyle habits: alcohol consumption and physical activity

- Living habits during the COVID period have tended to evolve negatively. It is true that smokers (usual or occasional), who account for 14%, have not changed since the pandemic began. However, the share of those who consume some or a lot of alcohol have increased (although the initial numbers were very low, from 4% to 7%) while the share of those who do little physical or sporting activity. Before COVID, half of the professionals practiced enough or a lot of physical activity, but it has dropped to 28% since then.

Satisfaction and valuation of the profession

- Throughout this period, doctors have felt supported by their colleagues (83% felt recognized by them at the worst time of the crisis) and patients (82%). However, such perceived support has been lower as we go up the professional gerarchy.
- They consider that their immediate bosses have treated them well in two-thirds of cases, but only a third feel that they have had the support of their organization and the managers of their workplaces.
- Social recognition, previously on low levels (40%) according to professionals, has significantly increased (72%) during the toughest times of the crisis. Although it fell back to the starting point (42%) when healthcare load spikes dropped.

Mental health support services

- Doctors feel less and less physically and emotionally prepared to cope with new spikes in virus incidence (51%). Likewise, more than a third fantasize about the possibility of leaving the profession. Again, it is women, young people and those who work in primary care who are the most pessimistic.



- A quarter of doctors are real or potential users of a mental health problem support services (16% use it or have used it and 13% would use it). Women and younger professionals are the ones who visit, have visited, or would visit these types of support centres to the greatest extent.

Madrid, 4 May 2021