

Review of: "Tocilizumab Plus Corticosteroid in Elderly Patients Hospitalized With COVID-19 Pneumonia: A Retrospective Cohort Study"

Muhammad Irfan¹

¹ Aga Khan University

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to review this paper. The paper is well written, and the objectives are clear.

My few comments are ;

1. Being a retrospective study its very interesting that out of 355 (from 1651) included patients authors find almost equal number in both groups (fig 1). This usually can only occur in proper prospective randomized control trial. This make a confusion about the validity of study.
2. In baseline characteristics there are difference in severity between the groups which probably plays a large role in why the treatment group had higher mortality. Authors have only mentioned the level of respiratory support as severity measures while it would be better to describe other standard parameters to assess severity like APACHE II or SOFA score at base line. Second, the P/F ratio at the time of tocilizumab administration is also important, not the oxygen saturation at the time of admission.
3. Authors have only mentioned CRP as inflammatory marker while decision of TOCI is mainly dependent on IL6 level and other inflammatory markers like Ferritin, LDH etc. The response is also dependent on IL6 levels. They should explain why they have not mentioned these in manuscript.
4. The comparison group has more patients who had received Remdesivir, a well proven benefit of remdesivir if timely given. Authors should do sub analysis on patients who had received Remdesivir and steroids and their time to clinical stability.
5. Already many reviewers have commented on dosages of TOCI and I agree with them that there could have a effect of using lower dosages.
6. There is a discrepancy in numbers in Abstract and table.
7. They have also used multiple statistical tests and should simplify their statistical analysis.