

# Review of: "Emotional status and fear in patients scheduled for elective surgery during COVID-19 pandemic: a nationwide cross-sectional survey (COVID-SURGERY)"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear Editor,

In reviewing this study, I would like to highlight some key observations and recommendations:

## Strengths:

1. **Scope and Design:** This study addresses a critical issue by focusing on the psychological and emotional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on patients scheduled for elective surgery. Given the high anxiety and potential exposure surrounding hospital settings, this patient group is particularly vulnerable, underscoring the importance of the study.
2. **Large and Diverse Sample:** The nationwide coverage, including 29 centers and 2,376 patients across Italy, provides broad representation across various demographics and types of surgery, strengthening the findings.
3. **Inclusion of Psychologist Input:** Including a psychologist in the preparation of questions on emotional state and fear increased the content validity of the study, making the results more reliable in accurately capturing patients' psychological states.

## Points for Improvement:

1. **Background and Literature Gap:** While the study provides a solid rationale, it may benefit from expanding on existing research on the psychological effects on other patient populations during the pandemic, with particular emphasis on the unique challenges faced by patients undergoing elective surgery.
2. **Methodology Clarity:** Methodological details such as the selection criteria for participating centers and the rationale for limiting each center to 100 patients could be more explicit. Adding these details would increase transparency and reproducibility.
3. **Consideration of Potential Confounding Factors:** While factors such as chronic illness and oncological disease are associated with increased fear, a deeper examination of other psychological influences (e.g., socioeconomic status or pre-existing mental health conditions) could further confirm the findings. Controlling for these confounding factors may lead to more robust conclusions.

4. **Emphasis on Quantitative and Qualitative Data:** Although the questionnaire mainly includes closed-ended questions, integrating qualitative feedback can provide richer information about patients' fears and emotions in their own words.

## Results Interpretation and Statistical Analysis:

1. **Details of Statistical Models:** Although ordered logistic regression models were used, more details about the variables included in the models and the interaction terms considered would improve readers' understanding. A brief rationale for model selection could further enhance clarity.
2. **Presentation of Findings:** When discussing descriptive statistics and regression analysis, presenting confidence intervals or p-values for key findings would strengthen the evidence for readers.

## Recommendations:

1. **Suggestions for Future Research:** The study highlights the need for psychological support; however, suggesting specific interventions, perhaps tailored to levels of fear or demographic characteristics, would improve the practical application of the paper.
2. **Policy Implications:** The findings reveal the value of policies to address elective surgeries during the pandemic, such as the inclusion of psychological assessments in preoperative consultations. Inclusion of recommendations for health policy and management may increase the importance of the study.

## Conclusion:

Genel olarak bu çalışma, COVID-19'un elektif cerrahi geçiren hastalar üzerindeki psikolojik etkisine ilişkin değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Metodolojik netlik, genişletilmiş literatür bağlamı ve ek istatistiksel ayrıntılar konusunda yapılacak küçük ayarlamalar, çalışmanın titizliğini ve uygulanabilirliğini artıracaktır.

Saygılarımla,