



Evaluating the perceptions and impacts affecting surgeons and allied health workers in otolaryngology-associated practice during the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic

Charmaine Szalay-Anderson, PhD¹, Daniyal Khan, MSc¹, Ranjani Somayaji, MD MPH FRCPC^{1,2,3}, Derrick R. Randall, MD MSc FRCSC^{1,4}

¹Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, ²Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Infectious Disease, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, ³Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, ⁴Section of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery, Department of Surgery, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

OBJECTIVE

To assess the perceptions of allied health professionals connected to OHNS, of the COVID-19 pandemic globally.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

- OHNS health care workers (HCWs) are at high-risk of COVID-19 transmission due to the intimate contact with the upper respiratory tract—the reservoir for SARS-CoV-2.
There are varying policy statements by OHNS societies regarding practice recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Assessment of perceptions of these recommendations, particularly to the wider allied OHNS HCWs such as nurses, administrative staff, audiologists and SLPs has thus far been limited, despite representing core practice partners in OHNS commonly exposed to similar risk procedures.
Perspectives and opinions regarding management of otolaryngology services during the COVID-19 pandemic by government and regulatory authorities may guide future policies to alleviate concerns for patients and HCWs.

METHODOLOGY

- Cross-sectional survey of OHNS surgical staff, trainees, and allied health professionals was performed using snowball sampling between May 30, 2021, to November 30, 2022.
The survey was divided into 6 parts + with validated psychosocial assessment (PHQ-9, GAD-7) incorporated into the survey:

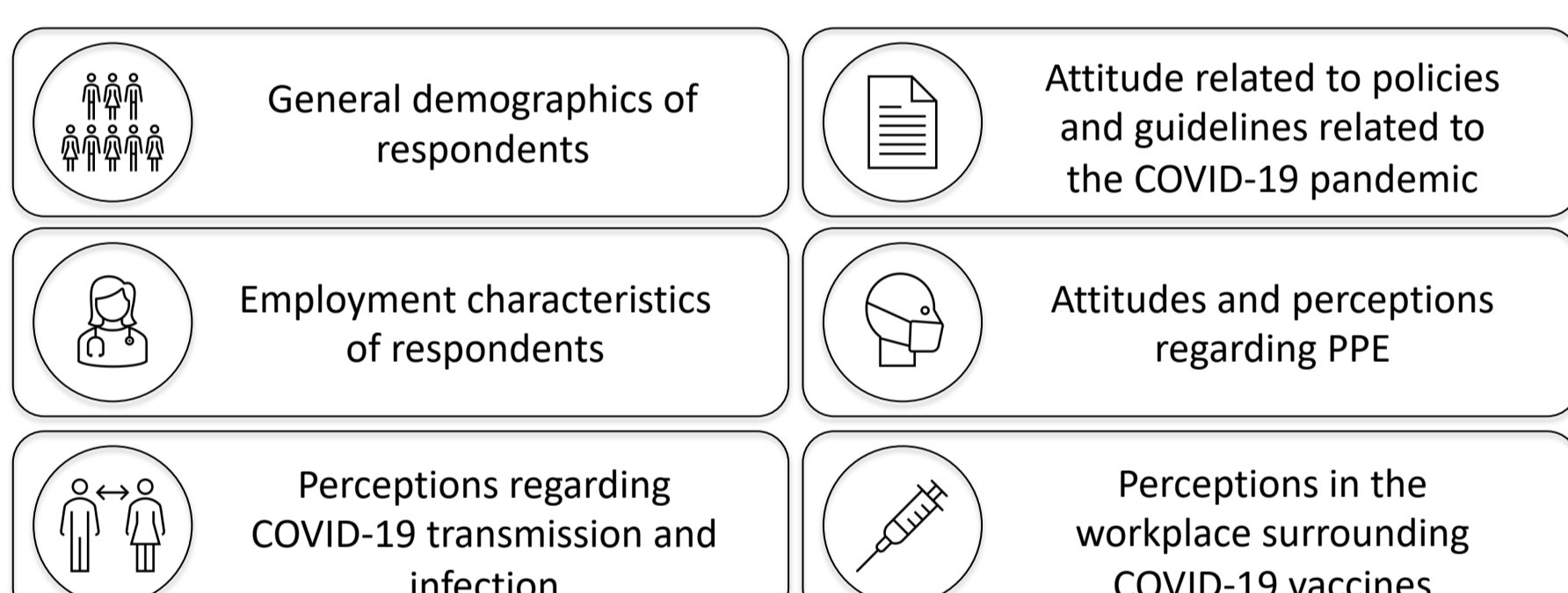


Figure 1. Breakdown of components of the study survey sent to respondents

- Data collected in Qualtrics CoreXM®, analyzed in STATA14.2, and reported using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

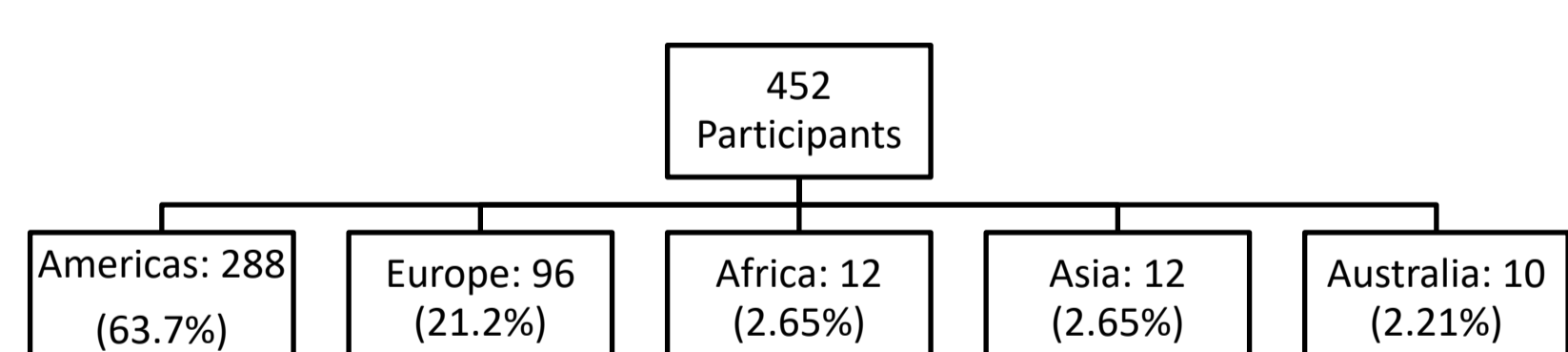


Figure 2. CONSORT diagram of survey respondents and geographical distribution

Table 1. Employment characteristics of survey respondents within OHNS.

Table with 3 columns: Category (Role, Length in role (years), Employment Status, Primary focus in OHNS), Description, N, and %.

Table 2. Work-related challenges of COVID-19 on OHNS HCWs

Table with 3 columns: Challenge, N, and %.

Table 3. Assessment of perceptions of safety during COVID-19 in the workplace.

Table with 3 columns: Perception, N, and %.

Table 4. Perceptions of local government and OHNS society policies and actions implemented.

Table with 3 columns: Policy/Action, N, and %.

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of OHNS workers' work activities were either modified or suspended, with Wave I identified as the most challenging.
The greatest fear identified by OHNS workers was fear of serious illness of a family member or loved one.
Perception of safety at work was increased with vaccination of patients, with most respondents identifying feeling moderately safe at time of response.
PPE was widely implemented by OHNS workers through the pandemic with increased measures being used in procedures being deemed higher risk of transmission (i.e., AGMPs). Mask wearing was frequent, but eye protection had lower uptake.
Most respondents were in favour of policies by regional health authorities and OHNS society guidance, but in large felt timing was too late.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an undeniable on the OHNS workforce. Respondents identified fears including safety in the workplace and frustration with guidance by regional policy makers and OHNS societies. Frequent communication and consistent guidelines and policies, are key to aid health professionals providing essential care.

LIMITATIONS

- Interpretation of data is limited by this survey's dependence on self-reported data and is thus prone to volunteer bias.
Majority of respondents are from North America which is not representative of global OHNS perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Implementation of a longitudinal approach to understanding the impact of evolving health guidelines and policies to varying challenges and perceptions over time.

REFERENCES

1. Piccirillo JF. Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery and COVID-19. JAMA. Sep 22 2020;324(12):1145-1146. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.15779
2. Crotty TJ, Corbett M, Gary S, et al. The psychological impact of COVID-19 on ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialists. Ir J Med Sci. Feb 2022;191(1):51-57. doi:10.1007/s11845-021-02569-4
3. Habib AM, Yu V, Yu M, Levi JR, Gudis DA, Overdeest J. Medical students' perspectives on how COVID-19 has impacted their otolaryngology educational experience: A nationwide survey study. Ear Nose Throat J. Aug 7 2022;1455613221115107. doi:10.1177/01455613221115107
4. Ridge SE, Chari DA, Kozin ED, et al. International Survey of Operative Practices for Otolaryngologists and Neurotologists During the COVID-19 Crisis. Otol Neurotol. Sep 1 2021;42(8):1275-1284. doi:10.1097/MAO.0000000000003219