



Approaching Otolaryngology Patients during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Editorial

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the novel virus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was declared global pandemic on by the World Health Organization (WHO) 11th March 2020 [1]. As Otolaryngologists have to deal with respiratory tract because of the nature of their work, they are at higher risk than other medical professionals. It is unavoidable for otolaryngologist to come into direct contact with secretions from upper respiratory tract, which is usually either coughed or sneezed as aerosols [2].

Amongst all healthcare professionals, otolaryngologists are at a high risk of being exposure to the SARS-CoV2 virus [3-5]. The highly contagious nature of this virus makes aerosol generating procedures of the oral cavity, nose, pharynx, larynx, and trachea highly hazardous [6]. Thus any examinations of mucous membranes of respiratory tracts should be performed by maintaining the optimum level of precaution. It is recommended that all ENT surgeries performed should be done using enhanced personal protective equipment irrespective COVID-19 [7-9]. This includes an N95 respirator, eye shield, Powered air-purifying respirator, disposable cap, gown, and disposable gloves.

Powered instrumentation should be avoided as much as possible [9-11]. The use of PAPR is recommended in case of unavoidable conditions [10]. Early tracheostomy should be avoided in patients with COVID-19 because of the higher viral load [8]. Diagnostic nasal endoscopies and laryngoscopies should be avoided as well. They must only be carried out in cases of suspected or proven malignancy or foreign body removal [9]. They are at high risk of exposure whether working in outpatient clinics, the emergency room, or inpatient wards.

Appropriate use of safety measures as per the exposure risks, it can prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection among otolaryngologists. Protocols and strategies should be established to prevent exposure of otolaryngologists and also ENT patients during this period.

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