Anxiety among Otolaryngology Residents during the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 Pandemic in Saudi Arabia: A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study

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Background: Otolaryngologists are among the health professionals most commonly working on the front lines against coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19). They are at high risk of exposure, as well as physical and psychological stress. Nevertheless, the psychological influence of working during the pandemic still needs to be explored.

Objective: This study aims to assess the anxiety symptoms among otolaryngology residents in Saudi Arabia during the novel coronavirus(COVID-19) pandemic.

Materials and Methods: Across-sectional qualitative study was carried out via a survey sent to otolaryngology residents in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire collected demographic data and included questions using the 7-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) scale to evaluate the residents' anxiety toward working during the pandemic. Data analysis was conducted using R v 3.6.2.

Results: Ninety-three otolaryngology residents completed the online questionnaire with a response rate of 42.5%. Of them, 30.1% had been in contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients. More than two-thirds of the respondents (68.8%) suffered from anxiety based on the GAD-7 scale; in the results, 45.2% had mild anxiety, 12.9% had moderate anxiety, and 10.8% had severe anxiety. Almost 24% of the respondents suffered from anxiety with a score of 10 or greater on the GAD-7 used as a cutoff point. Anxiety was more prevalent in married residents compared with single ones (18.9% vs. 5.45%, P = 0.002). In addition, it was prevalent in 40% of smokers compared with 5.13% of nonsmokers (P = 0.001).

Conclusion: Anxiety levels among otolaryngology residents were high during the COVID-19 pandemic.