CHALLENGES CREATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY MEDICINE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES

Thomas E Tanner¹, Nichole R Davis², Brent D Kaziny², Erin E Endom², Esther M Sampayo²

¹ Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine
² BCM/TCH, Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine

Keywords: COVID-19, Disaster management, Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Qualitative

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges to pediatric emergency medicine (PEM) departments. The purpose of this study was to identify these challenges and ascertain how centers overcame barriers in creating solutions to continue to provide high-quality care and keep their workforce safe during the early pandemic.

Materials/Methods: This is a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with physicians in leadership positions who have disaster or emergency management experience. Participants were identified through purposive sampling. Interviews were recorded and transcribed electronically. Themes and codes were extracted from the transcripts by two independent coders. Constant comparison analysis was performed until thematic saturation was achieved. Member-checking was completed to ensure trustworthiness.

Results: 14 PEM-trained physicians participated in this study. Communication, leadership and planning, clinical practice, and personal adaptations were the principal themes identified. Recommendations elicited include: improving communication strategies; increasing emergency department (ED) representation within hospital-wide incident command; preparing for a surge and accepting adult patients; personal protective equipment supply and usage; developing testing strategies; and adaptations individuals made to their practice to keep themselves and their families safe. For a full list of challenges and recommendations, see Table 1.

Conclusions: By sharing COVID-19 experiences and offering solutions to commonly encountered problems, pediatric emergency departments may be better prepared for future pandemics.

Images / Graph / Table