

ESOT 2023 - ABSTRACT

Title:

Perceptions, emotions and social representations related to organ donation in healthcare workers: a qualitative research study after the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy

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BACKGROUND

The study aims at analyzing the perceptions, emotions and representations related to organ donation in healthcare workers of Critical Areas, with a special focus on the procurement difficulties related to the COVID-19. This scenario entailed a change for most medical procedures, that needed to be reviewed and adapted to the new situation. The COVID-19, in fact, had a strong impact on procurement activity and on the attitude of healthcare workers towards organ donation.

METHODS

The study sample involves 100 healthcare professionals (doctors and nurses) from Intensive Care and Emergency Departments of 9 hospitals, distributed in 3 Italian regions (Lombardy, Lazio and Sicily). Individual anonymous open-ended interviews have been conducted, exploring the experience of organ donation during the pandemic on three facets: Emotions, Organization and Future perspectives). Interview texts were analyzed using a content analysis carried out by two independent judges.

RESULTS

Data analysis showed specific emotions of healthcare workers related to COVID-19 experience (mainly fear and helplessness) and the use of primitive defense mechanisms, such as denial and repression, to face the emotional experience. On the other hand, organ donation brought restorative emotions (such as hope and satisfaction) which seem to represent a protective resource for the workers. For the organizational facets, COVID-19 had an impact especially on the logistic related to organ donation and on the relationships between healthcare workers and the families of potential donors. Considering the future perspectives, the need for adhoc in-the-field training emerged as well as the need to enhance social awareness toward organ donation, since an ambivalent attitude in the general population has been perceived.

CONCLUSION

Organ donation activities has represented a protective factor for the healthcare workers during the pandemic, since they fostered a feeling of continuity in daily work experience. However, some critical issues appeared, as the difficulty to communicate to the families due to pandemic restrictions. This work gives various hints to improve the experience of health workers in organ donation during critical times, suggesting the implementation of specific training focused on emotion management strategies.