

P48 : THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HIV TESTING

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with severe disruptions in health care services, and nonpharmacological measures such as social distancing also had an impact on access to screening tests and on the long-term care of people living with HIV globally.

OBJECTIVES

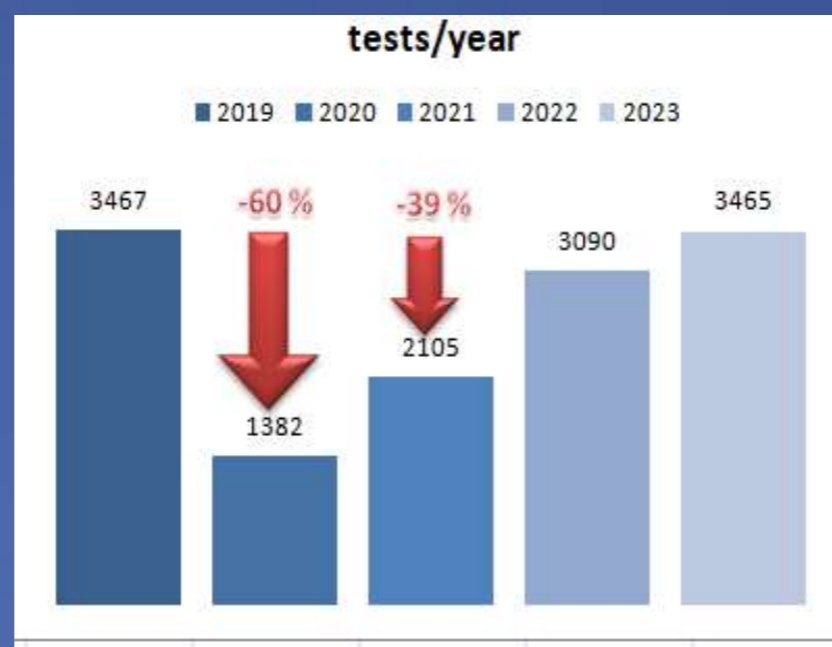
We aimed to describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV testing and analyse the epidemiological aspects of HIV infection among the patient of the university hospital of Constantine.

MATERIALS and METHODS

this is a retrospective descriptive study conducted at the central Microbiology laboratory of the university hospital of Constantine over a period of 4 years (April 2019-dec2023). The Data was collected out of the registers of HIV testing, WB, and viral load. The serum testing was performed by ELISA 4th generation kits. Positive tests were confirmed by Western blot test (Biorad). EXELMICROSOFT was used for the data treatment.

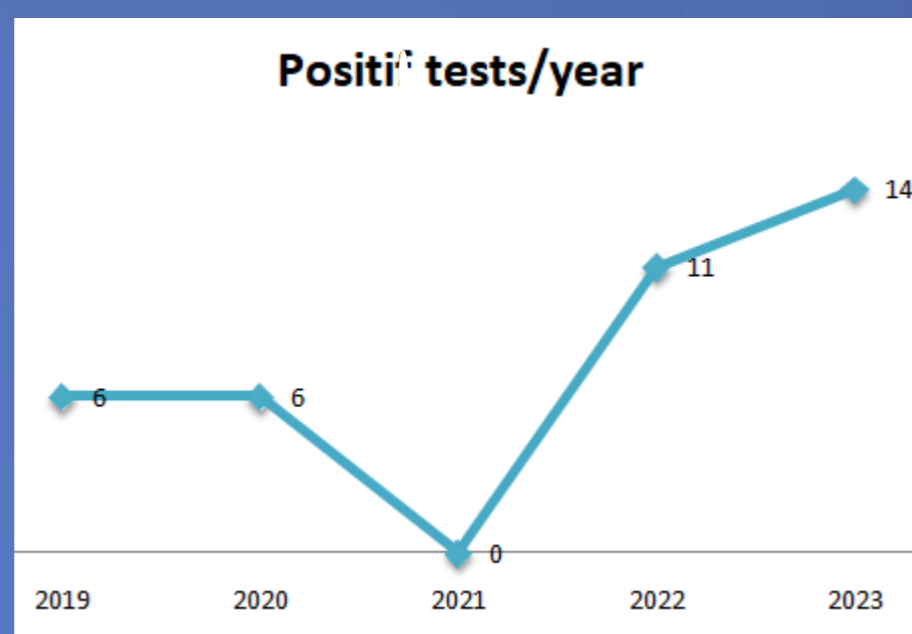
RESULTS

During the study period; 3467 HIV tests were performed in 2019, 1382 in 2020, 2105 for 2021; about 3090 in 2022 and 3465 on 2023 , we can notice that the HIV testing activity has decreased of 60% during 1st year of the COVID19 pandemic and 39% in the 2nd.



The prevalence of positive tests was between 00% and 0.69% yet we notice that the annual number of positive tests has doubled during the post pandemic period.

Sex ratio M/F was generally around 1 : a masculin dominance on first 2 years and for 2023 versus a slit feminine majority for 2021 and 2022.



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DISCUSSION

the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on HIV testing is substantial; as a result of the first wave of the pandemic our testing activity has dropped y 60% compared to the pre-pandemic period, a slight improvement was seen on the 2nd year as we got 39% decrease ; this may be assigned to the restriction inflicted by the pandemic and the rehabilitaion of healthcare centers exclusively to COVID patients in order to contain the outbreak.

The WHO declared a 22% declin on HIV testing worldwide while the AIDS Healthcare Fundation records indicated a 38% decrease and 14 % were reported by french health authority. These numbers remain significantly infirior to our data

When considering the epidemiological aspects; the prevalence of HIV in Algeria as reported by UNAIDS is around 0.17%-0.58% our results fit into this marge. The incidence of the infection increased on 2022/2023 same tendance was observed in uk (+6%) whereas the US CDC reported a declin on the number of positive tests

During study period the sex ratio started with a masculine prevalence then it turned into a feminine predominance; this same tendency was reported on the UNAIDS Algeria while the bording Maghreb countries tend to have a masculine predominance.

CONCLUSION

The HIV testing was deeply compromised by the COVID19 pandemic ; the limited access to mass HIV testing caused major damage on programs aiming the eradication of the HIV disease.

Strategies to improve access to diagnosis and treatment are essential for both pandemic and post-pandemic periods.