

THE UNEXPECTED LACK OF NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA SURVEILLANCE

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A single-center study of 350 hepatocellular carcinoma patients found that the COVID-19 pandemic did not reduce surveillance rates and was associated with more diagnoses at potentially curative stages.

KEY POINTS

- Surveillance rates for hepatocellular carcinoma did not differ significantly between pre-pandemic (21.8%) and pandemic (27.0%) periods, with no change in symptomatic presentation rates.
- During the pandemic, patients were significantly more likely to be diagnosed at a potentially curative stage (BCLC 0 or A: 36.1% vs. 20.9% pre-pandemic; OR 2.13, 95% CI 1.25-3.65, $P=0.005$).
- The incidence of newly diagnosed cases remained stable at approximately 28 cases per year before and during the pandemic.
- The authors note that despite well-known benefits, hepatocellular carcinoma surveillance rates have remained consistently low over the last decade.
- This retrospective analysis may inform hepatology practices concerned about pandemic effects on cancer surveillance programs.

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