MEDICATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES DURING THE SECOND WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A SNAPSHOT OF THE EUROPEAN SITUATION

Przemysław Kardas[1], Job FM van Boven[2], Björn Wettermark[3], Enrica Menditto[4], Hilary Pinnock[5], Ioanna Tsiligianni[6], Tamás Ágh[7]*

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BACKGROUND

- In may 2020, WHO surveyed service delivery for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) across 155 countries and found that COVID-19 markedly affected NCD services in all regions and income groups[§]

OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate **medication management practices for NCDs** during the second wave of the **COVID-19 pandemic across Europe**
- To assess **association with COVID-19 burden and country income**

Figure 1. Medication management cycle



METHODS

- In December 2020, a **cross-sectional, web-based survey** was conducted in 38 European countries and Israel
  - Key elements of the NCDs medication management cycle were defined (*Figure 1*)
  - A **33-item questionnaire** was developed based upon this framework
- Descriptive statistics, nonparametric tests and generalized linear models were applied
  - COVID-19 burden was defined as the number of positive cases and deaths per 100,000 inhabitants
  - Country income was assessed as gross domestic product per capita (GDP/capita) at purchasing power parity

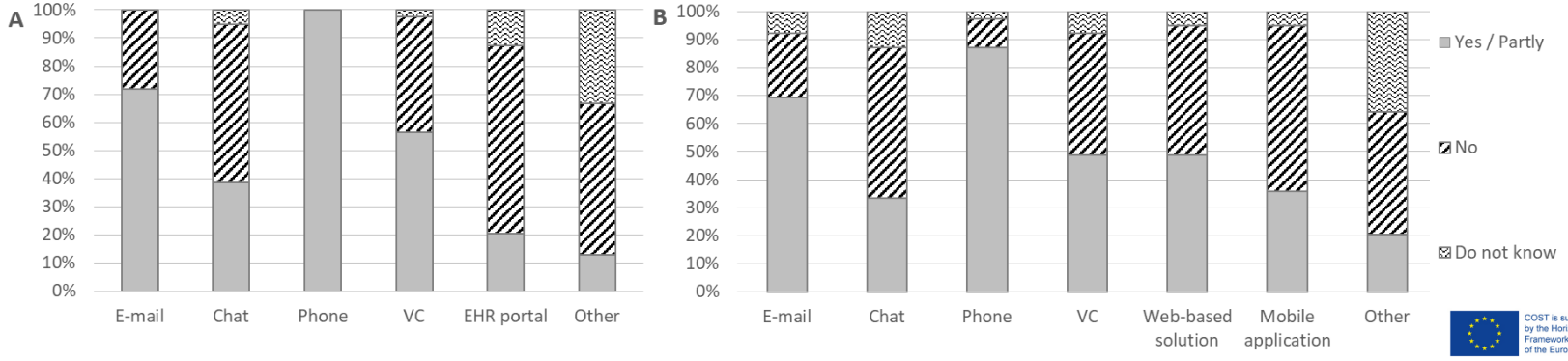
RESULTS

- 53 experts from **39 countries** completed the survey
- **COVID-19 limited the number of face-to-face appointments** in primary care, and outpatient clinics for NCDs in 35 (90%) of European countries
  - Especially in countries with a greater number of COVID-19 cases (P=0.03) and deaths (P=0.05) per 100,000 inhabitants
- COVID-19 **accelerated telehealth** and remote consulting
- Mean±SD **number of available forms of teleconsultation services** was **3±1.3** (*Figure 2*)
  - Significantly lower in upper-middle compared to high income countries (P=0.05)

CONCLUSIONS

- Our survey highlights **major disparities** in the way European countries dealt with the challenge of the **management of NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Reduction in face-to-face consultations** was associated with greater **burden of COVID-19**; however, the **uptake of e-health services** was associated with higher **country income**
- Urgent need for a **paradigm shift in NCD-related healthcare services** to assure the maintenance of chronic treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond

Figure 2. Availability of various forms of teleconsultations (A), and options for requesting chronic medication prescriptions (B) across 39 European countries, as per December 2020 (VC: videoconsultation; EHR: electronic health record)



1 Medication Adherence Research Centre, Department of Family Medicine, Medical University of Lodz, Poland; 2 Department of Clinical Pharmacy & Pharmacology, Medication Adherence Expertise Center of the northern Netherlands (MAECON), University Medical Center Groningen, University of Groningen, The Netherlands; 3 Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Uppsala University, Sweden and Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Lithuania; 4 Department of Pharmacy, CIRFF, Center of Pharmacoeconomics and Drug Utilization Research, University of Naples Federico II, Italy; 5 Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom; 6 Department of Social Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Crete, Crete, Greece; 7 Syreon Research Institute and Division of Pharmacoeconomics, Department of Pharmaceutics, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Pecs, Hungary

§ WHO (2020) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on noncommunicable disease resources and services: results of a rapid assessment.

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*tamas.agh@syreon.eu

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