

# A Single-Centre Study of IBD patients' experience during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Introduction

- The COVID-19 Pandemic has had significant implications on patients with chronic illnesses

- We were interested in ascertaining the impact, both physiologically and psychologically, the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease on biologic agents.

- “Biologic” drugs modulate the function of a person’s immune system and may make them more susceptible to infections.

## Background

- In GUH Gastroenterology Clinic, there are approximately three hundred on biologic agents including Infliximab, Vedolizumab, Golimumab and Adalimumab

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (2) impacts on patients by impacting negatively on areas such as work-life, pursuing relationships and sleep.

- Nationally, the Department of Public Health had advised the implementation of various measures aimed at slowing the spread and limiting the impact of COVID-19 on the general population.

- These include guidelines relating to social distancing, self isolation and cocooning. Advice specific to patients on biologic agents was sent to patients via text messaging.

## Aims

- We were keen to decipher if patients adhered to public health measures.

- We were also interested in ascertaining if these public health measures such as social distancing and cocooning are having negative impacts or otherwise on the psychological well-being of patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease on biologic agents

## Methods

- This study sought to recruit patients attending GUH who are prescribed biologic agents for their Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

- Demographics were recorded

Patients were contacted via telephone and completed an IBD-Control Questionnaire verbally over the telephone. A further questionnaire was completed either via email or return postage. This detailed:

- Patients’ understanding of, and adherence to introduced Public Health measures
- Adherence to biologic agent during initial stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- The impact of the Pandemic on their daily lives.

- Responses relate to the initial 8 weeks of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ireland from March until June 2020.

## Results

- 113 patients (57 male, 56 female) were contacted including patients on Infliximab, Adalimumab and Vedolizumab.

- 79% (N=90) of patients felt that their IBD disease activity was much the same when compared with prior to the pandemic.

- On average, participants rated their health at 85/100 over the preceding two weeks.

- Only 5% of participants missed a dose of their biologic agent during the Pandemic, (40% unable to obtain a renewed prescription (Figure 1).

- 81.5% of participants were aware of recommendations around cocooning and social distancing for patients on immunosuppressive therapy. 79% of participants cocooned.

50% of participants felt they could have been better informed

- 84% of patients stopped working or altered their working habits during the Pandemic (Figure 2).

- Meanwhile, less than 10% of participants continued to see their families and friends as normal.

- Almost 70% of patients exercised at home or within the recommended distance from their home.

- Almost one quarter (25%) described themselves as either slightly, moderately, severely/extremely anxious or depressed

Figure 1

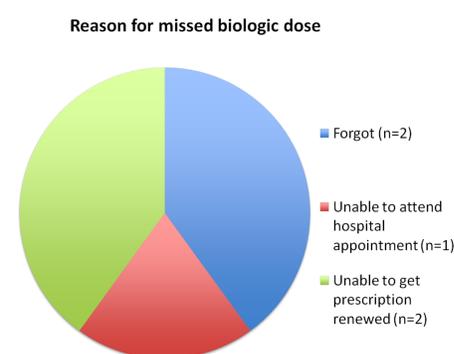
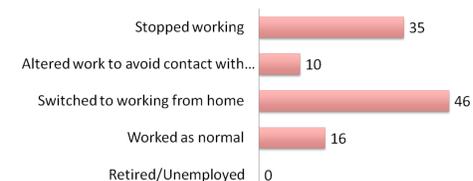


Figure 2

Alteration to work practices during COVID-19 Pandemic



## Conclusions

- IBD patients on biologics did not note significant difference in their disease activity.
- Subjective perception of their own health was reassuringly good among participants.
- Only a small portion of patients omitted or missed doses of their medication.

- A majority of patients complied with guidance regarding cocooning and self-isolation.

- IBD patients made significant adjustments to their daily lives particularly with regard to work, relationships with family, exercise and shopping/essential services.

- A startling proportion of patients described themselves as mildly, moderately or severely depressed.

- It is likely that this Pandemic will have far-reaching consequences for this patient cohort in terms of quality of life and the delivery of care to patients with chronic illnesses in the future.

## Bibliography

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