Frequency of Penile Fractures During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT Objective: To examine patients with penile fractures who admitted our urological emergency outpatient clinic within 6 months from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and to compare with the same period in 2019. Material and Methods: Patients who came to our urological emergency outpatient clinic during the pandemic period between April and October 2020 and non-pandemic period between April and October 2019 were compared. The reasons for admission to the hospital of these patients were examined and the diagnoses of the patients in both periods were compared statistically. Results: During the pandemic period, the number of patients with penile fractures increased significantly. On the other hand, there was no significant change in the number of other patients. Conclusion: We believe that the number of penile fractures has increased due to the changes in the sexual desire and habits of the couples during the quarantine days.

Keywords: Penile diseases; COVID-19; urologic diseases

The COVID-19 epidemic that emerged in China at the end of 2019 spread rapidly around the world and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. Containment measures due to pandemic in the past months have caused extensive economic and social damage in many countries. During the quarantine, serious changes occurred in the daily lives of families. People were forced to stay home more. Especially couples had to spend much more time sharing the whole day, and sexual life and habits have changed significantly in many countries due to restrictions.

Fear, anxiety, and panic feelings may lead to negative psychological reactions such as adjustment disorder and depression. These mood changes may lead to a decrease in the couple’s sexual interest. And may also lead to unexpected behavior. As a result, men and women who feel depressed may experience increased sexual interest and sexual response. Moreover, anxiety can facilitate sexual arousal in sexually active individuals. In addition, the ability to share more time of a partner without the stress of daily life can improve the quality of intimacy in couples.
So far, there are very few reports on the effects of COVID-19 on sexual health. In our study, we aimed to evaluate the changes in the sexual behavior of individuals during the quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cases of penile fracture we encountered as a result.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

During the pandemic in the 6-month period between April 2020 and October 2020, 506 patients who applied to our urological emergency outpatient clinic for various reasons such as renal colic, acute urinary retention, hematuria, acute urogenital system infection, testicular torsion, urogenital trauma and penile fracture were documented in Group 1.

In addition, 532 patients who applied to our urological emergency outpatient clinic between April 2019 and October 2019 for the same reasons were also documented in Group 2.

It was evaluated if there was a statistically significant difference in the diagnosis of the disease between two different periods of time in the same months.

Since the distribution of patients who applied to our urological emergency outpatient clinic in 2018 and previous years did not differ from 2019, therefore we only compared the number of cases to 2019.

This patient group was evaluated retrospectively after the approval had been obtained from the ethics committee of Prof. Dr. Cemil Taşçıoğlu City Hospital (Date-No: 20.10.2020-403).

All studies involving the “human” were made in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration 2008 principles.

In order to examine penile fractures in all these cases, the age of these patients, whether they were married or not, their educational status, and the reason for penile fracture (intercourse position, masturbation) were questioned.

In addition, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test was applied to all patients we operated due to penile fracture.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

Number Cruncher Statistical System Statistical Software (Utah, USA) program was used for statistical analysis. While evaluating the study data, in addition to descriptive statistical methods (mean, standard deviation, median, frequency, ratio), Shapiro-Wilk test and box plot graphics were used for the normal distribution of variables. Pearson’s chi-square test was used to compare qualitative data. Significance was evaluated at the p<0.05 level.

**RESULTS**

During the pandemic period (1st April–1st October), 506 patients applied to our urological emergency outpatient clinic. The distribution of these patients is as follows; 120 patients with renal colic due to urinary stone, 84 patients due to acute urinary retention, 84 patients due to hematuria, 10 patients due to testicular torsion, 178 patients due to acute urogenital infection, 20 patients with urogenital trauma and 10 patients with penile fracture were applied.

In the non-pandemic period, 532 patients applied to our emergency urology outpatient clinic in the same months of 2019. Of them, 124 had renal colic, 82 had acute urinary retention, 70 had hematuria, 10

<table>
<thead>
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<th>TABLE 1: Distribution of emergency urological patients.</th>
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<td><strong>Pandemic period (Gr. 1)</strong></td>
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<td>Renal colic</td>
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Pearson chi-square test. *p<0.05.
patients had testicular torsion, 213 patients had acute urogenital infection, 30 patients had urogenital trauma and 3 patients had penile fractures (Table 1).

Based on the complaints reported to the emergency urology outpatient clinic, the assessment of the pandemic period and the pre-pandemic period indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the incidence rates of renal colic, acute urinary retention, hematuria, testicular torsion, urogenital infection and urogenital trauma (p>0.05).

Penile fracture incidence rates were found statistically significantly higher in the pandemic period than non-pandemic period (p<0.05). The Odds ratio is 3.562 (95% confidence interval: 1.075-13.01) and we can say that the risk has increased 3.5 times (Figure 1).

In addition, the demographic characteristics of our patients with penile fractures and the reasons for the fracture are documented in Table 2. Average age of our patients was 41.2 (between 25-65) and education level of 7 (70%) out of 10 patients was college or below and 3 (30%) was bachelor.

Patients did not have predisposing factors and medications that could cause penile fracture.

PCR test of all the patients we operated due to penile fracture was negative.

**DISCUSSION**

Social isolation, inability to meet relatives and friends can have a direct impact on the physical and psychological health of individuals, and it can be assumed that couples who are quarantined together are closer to each other.14

However, during the pandemic period, it was reported that sexual desire and frequency of sexual intercourse decreased in many couples, whereas the frequency of masturbation and pornography use increased in many people.15

In our study, we found a significant increase in patients with penile fracture in the pandemic period, unlike other patient groups who applied for emergency reasons.

We believe that the increase in the number of penile fractures in our patient group will be due to the couples spending more time with each other during the quarantine days and the desire to try different sexual habits due to the psychological effect of the pandemic.
Penile fracture often occurs in dog-style position.\textsuperscript{16,17} In some studies, it has been reported that it is more common in positions where the partner is on top.\textsuperscript{17} Masturbation, turning in bed during erection, and the taqandan technique applied in some Middle Eastern countries are among the other reasons that lead to penile fractures.\textsuperscript{18}

Our patients described the causes of penile fracture as follows; 5 cases described that the partner was on top. Three of our patients stated that they were turning in bed, 2 of our patients did not give a satisfactory history.

We have not identified significant relation between education level of patients and penile fracture.

A penile fracture typically occurs with hearing crackling sound followed by pain and detumescence in the penis. Then, ecchymosis and swelling occurs in the penis.\textsuperscript{19}

Tunica albugenia resists intracavernosal pressure up to 1,500 mm Hg.\textsuperscript{20} If the intracavernosal pressure increases with the bending of the erect penis, rupture of the tunica albugenia occurs.

If the diagnosis of penile fracture is confirmed, surgical repair should be done as soon as possible. The British Association of Urologic Surgeons recommends that the repair be done within 24 hours.\textsuperscript{21} While the complication rate as a result of early surgical repair was 7.6%, it was 68.7% in late surgical repair (between 24 hours and 4 days).

The incidence of penile fracture is unknown in Turkey and many countries. Its incidence in the United States has been reported as 1 in 175,000 male population. However, the incidence is higher in some Middle Eastern countries.\textsuperscript{22}

The data of penile fracture incidence in Turkey is insufficient. According to our hospital data, we see penile fracture incidence as 6-8 cases per year routinely

However, during the 6 months pandemic period, the number of patients with penile fracture showed an extraordinary increase.

**CONCLUSION**

In our study, we examined the patients who came to our urological emergency outpatient clinic during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the patient group, we observed that patients with penile fractures showed a significant increase compared to the non-pandemic period in the same months. We believe that this increase is due to the change in the sexual desire and habits of the patients during the pandemic period. The fact that patients with penile fracture do not show symptoms of COVID-19 and their PCR test are negative strengthens this opinion.

Larger case number is needed to support these results during the quarantine period.

**Source of Finance**

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**Conflict of Interest**

No conflicts of interest between the authors and / or family members of the scientific and medical committee members or members of the potential conflicts of interest, counseling, expertise, working conditions, share holding and similar situations in any firm.

**Authorship Contributions**

\textbf{Idea/Concept:} Ahmet Arıman; \textbf{Design:} Ahmet Arıman; \textbf{Control/Supervision:} Erkan Merder; \textbf{Data Collection and/or Processing:} Eren Görkem Kutlutürk; \textbf{Analysis and/or Interpretation:} Ahmet Arıman; \textbf{Literature Review:} Eren Görkem Kutlutürk; \textbf{Writing the Article:} Ahmet Arıman; \textbf{Critical Review:} Erkan Merder.
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