

Introduction

- Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 primarily affects the respiratory system, but a multi-systemic involvement has been reported, including the gastrointestinal tract (GIT) causing GIT symptoms.
- This study aims to characterize GIT symptoms in hospitalised COVID-19 patients in two tertiary hospitals in Cameroon.

Methods and Materials

- We conducted a retrospective analysis of hospital records of patients admitted at the COVID-19 units of two tertiary medical centers in Cameroon, between March 2020 to December 2020.
- Data on demographics, clinical characteristics, and laboratory and radiologic data of COVID-19 confirmed patients were included in the final analysis.
- Demographics included age and gender, clinical characteristics included gastrointestinal symptoms on admission (vomiting, anorexia, abdominal pain, and diarrhoea), and radiologic data were defined as findings consistent with COVID-19.
- R version 4.2 was used to analyze descriptive data, the chi-square test was used to test for associations, and p was considered significant when < 0.05

Figures

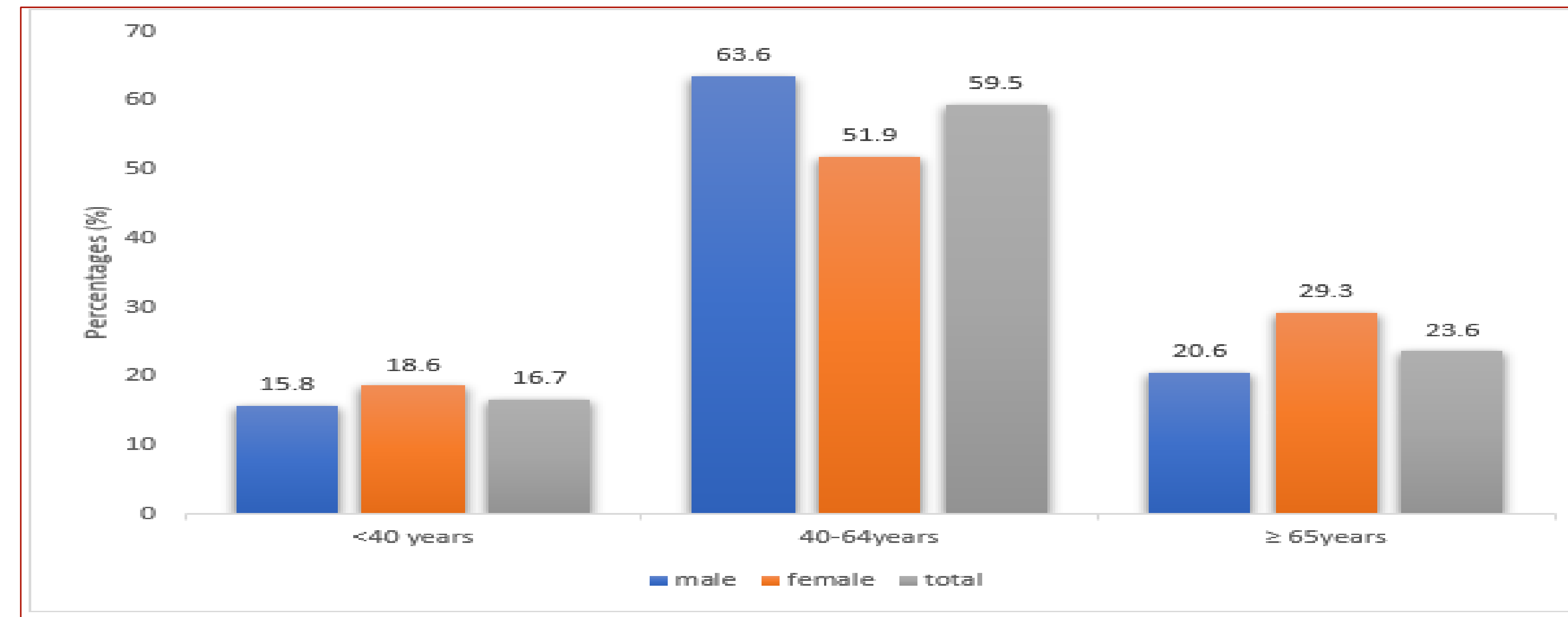


Figure 1: Age of hospitalized COVID-19 patients

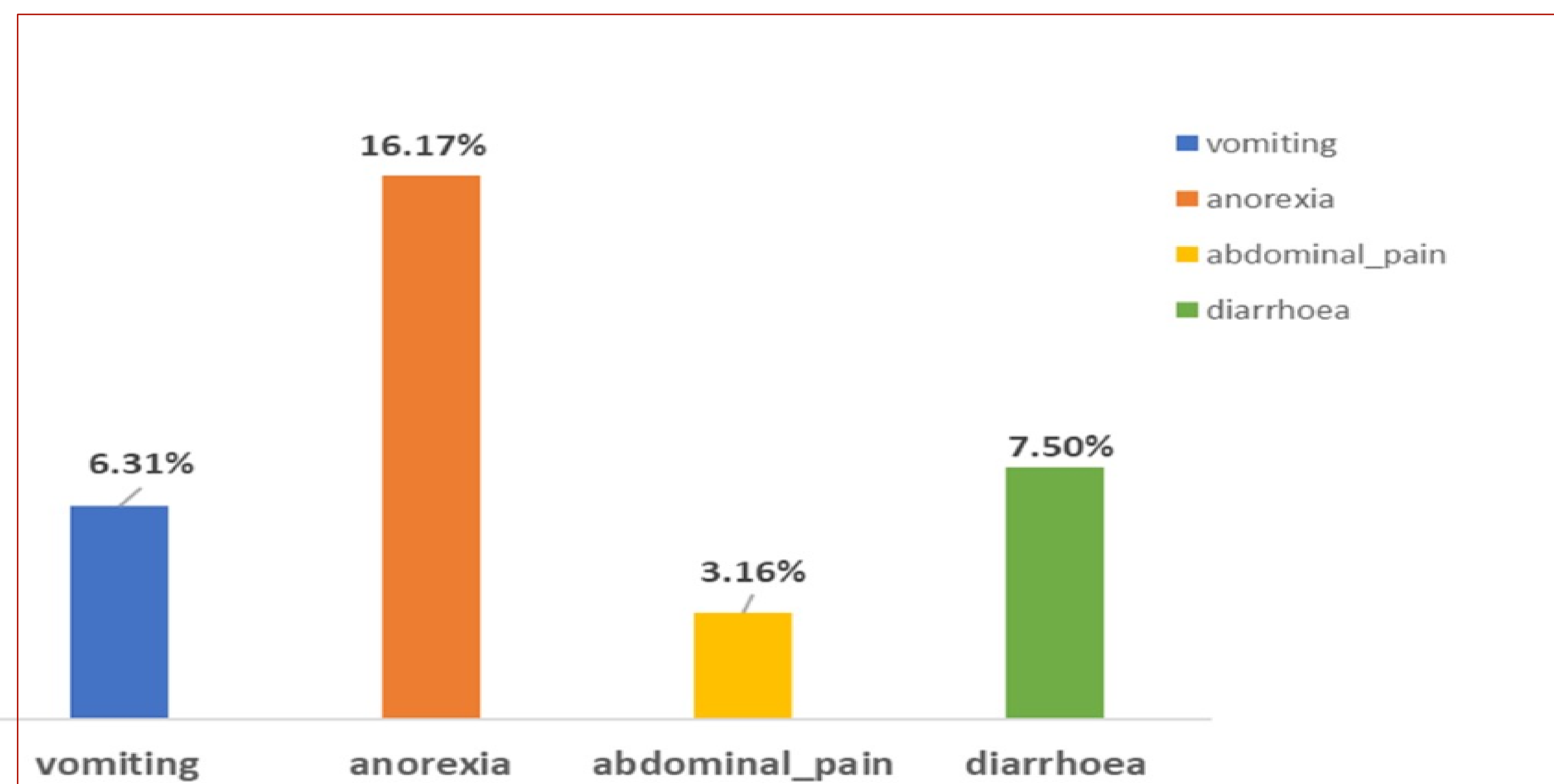


Figure 2: Prevalence of Gastrointestinal symptoms in hospitalized COVID-19 patients

Results

- Overall, A total of 650 files were reviewed, and 507 participants met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis.
- 305 (65%) were males, and the mean was age 54 ± 14 years.
- Patients were generally overweight to obese (BMI 30.7±6.8kg/m²), with the majority having a cardiovascular risk factor or comorbid condition 301(59.4%).
- Baseline demographics were not different among those presenting with gastrointestinal symptoms compared to those without.
- A total of 142 (28.%) patients had at least one gastrointestinal symptom.
- The most common symptoms were anorexia 82 (16.%), diarrhea 38 (7.5%), and vomiting 32 (6%).
- The average day of appearance of GI symptoms before admission was 8.8 days. Laboratory results on admission revealed no significant differences in leukocyte count, hemoglobin, platelets, and liver enzymes.
- The median duration of hospital stay was 7 days, and it did not differ between those with or without GI symptoms (7 vs 8 days p= 0.3).
- Overall in-hospital mortality was 161(31.7%); there was no statistical significant difference in the mortality rate of patients who presented with GI symptoms (30 vs 23.6 p= 0.16)

Conclusion

- One in four persons hospitalized for COVID-19 in Douala had at least a gastrointestinal symptom.
- Therefore, COVID 19 testing should be considered for patients with GI symptoms.