

Investigating the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Quality of Life and Depression-Related Measures of Psychosocial Wellbeing Among Pediatric Patients with Celiac Disease

Reema Amin, BA

MSA Mentor: Monique Germone, PhD, BCBA

We investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of life (QoL), anxiety, and depression-related measures in pediatric patients with celiac disease (CD). The psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on patients with CD, an autoimmune disorder with known effects on psychosocial health, has not been specifically studied. Retrospective data from 157 pre-pandemic (August 2016 to July 2019) and 450 mid-pandemic (November 2020 to July 2022) pediatric patient charts with CD were analyzed, specifically looking at responses to the Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) and the Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory (PedsQL). Results showed that caregiver proxy-reported anxiety symptoms, especially obsessive-compulsive behaviors ($p=0.03$) and panic-related anxiety ($p=0.03$), in children with CD were significantly higher during the pandemic. Quality of life scores showed minimal improvements across all domains (physical, emotional, social, school functioning). These findings highlight the need for enhanced psychosocial support for pediatric CD patients during periods of stress, such as pandemics, as well as continued monitoring. Future research could explore the ongoing impact and long-term psychosocial effects of crises on pediatric patients with chronic conditions.