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IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE GASTROENTEROLOGY DEPARTMENT – THE GASTROENTEROLOGISTS’ PERSPECTIVE NATIONWIDE AND THE REAL IMPACT IN A PORTUGUESE CENTER

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BACKGROUND

Several Gastroenterology Societies created recommendations in order to reduce any non-essential exposure to the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus. The purposes of this paper are 1) to evaluate the **national gastroenterologists’ perspective** of the impact of COVID-19 and 2) to evaluate the **impact of the reorganization of the Gastroenterology department of Centro Hospitalar Vila Nova de Gaia/Espinho (CHVNG/E)** during COVID-19 Pandemic.

METHODS

- **1st purpose:** Online survey of 32 questions was distributed to gastroenterologists nationwide.
- **2nd purpose:** Retrospective analysis of some endoscopic procedures performed at the Gastroenterology Department of CHVNG/E between *March 16 and May 8* during the years *2019 and 2020*.

RESULTS

1st purpose: 67 gastroenterologists have answered our survey between April 15th and May 5th 2020, mostly females (53.7%).

- All departments had suffered modifications
 - 86.6% participants worked in a hospital with COVID-19 patients
 - 16.4% assigned to assist those patients, mainly in regular hospitalization and interns (figure 1A, 1D)
 - 94% affirmed to have *non-essential* endoscopic procedures postponed
 - 88.1% remote consultations. 11.9% without clinical visits.
- 90% residents changed their activity (figure 1C)
 - 64.2% respondents agreeing with an internship extension.

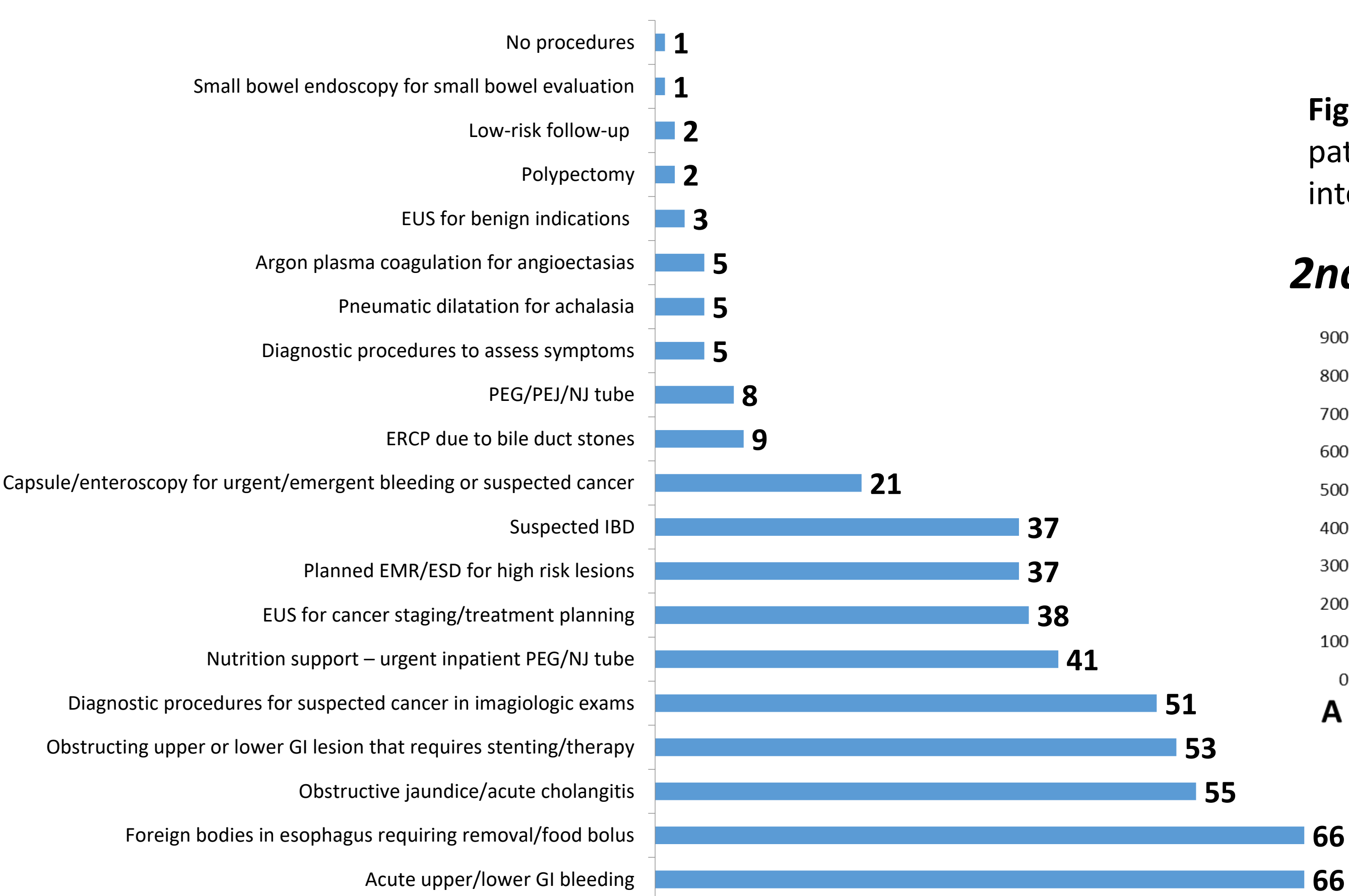


Figure 2. Procedures performed during COVID-19 Outbreak according to each doctor.

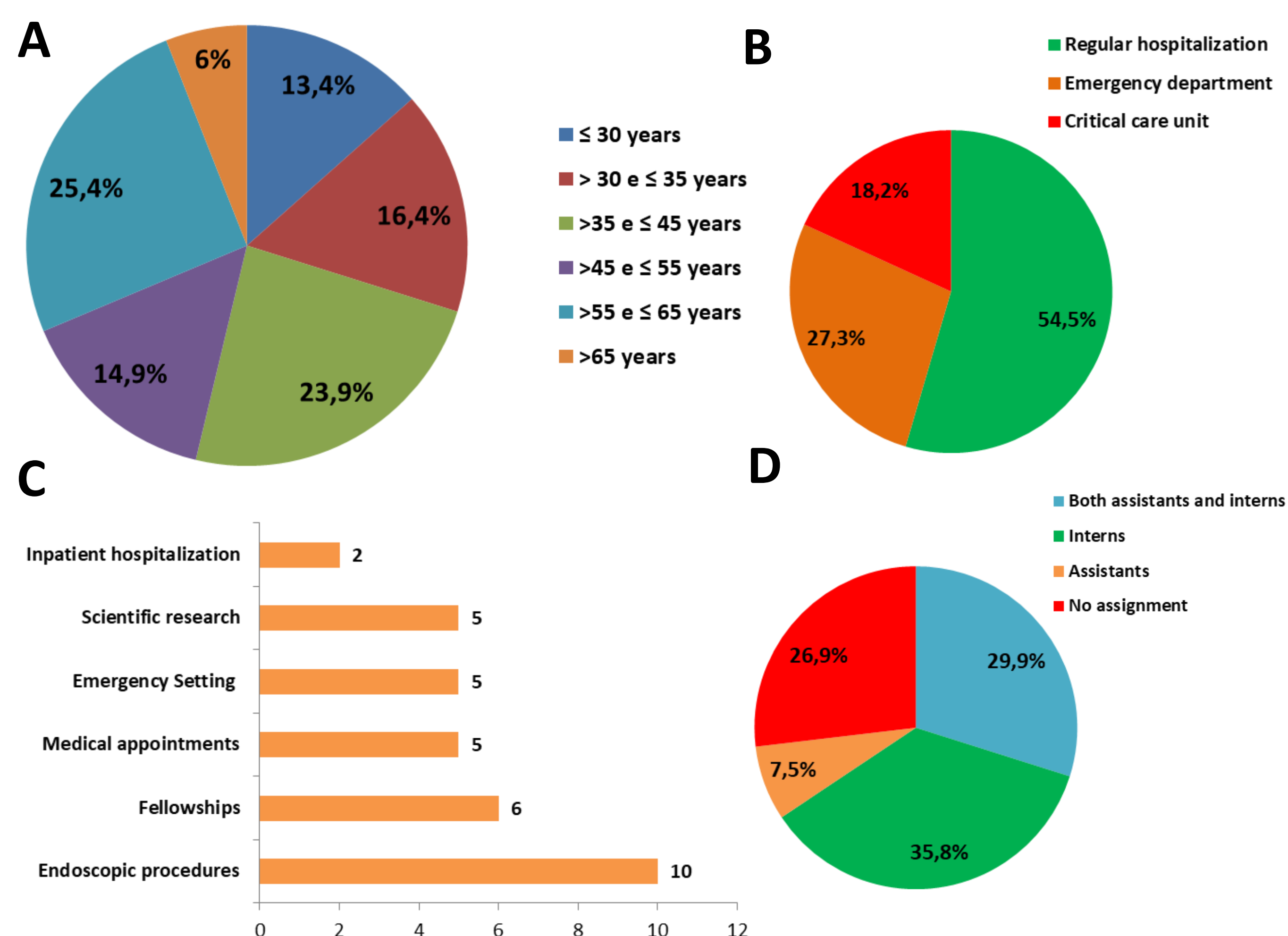


Figure 1. A – Participants’ age distribution; B- Doctors’ distribution to assist COVID-19 patients; C- Residents' activities modified due to the COVID-19 outbreak according to the interns; D- Medical career of the doctors assigned to assist COVID-19 patients.

2nd purpose:

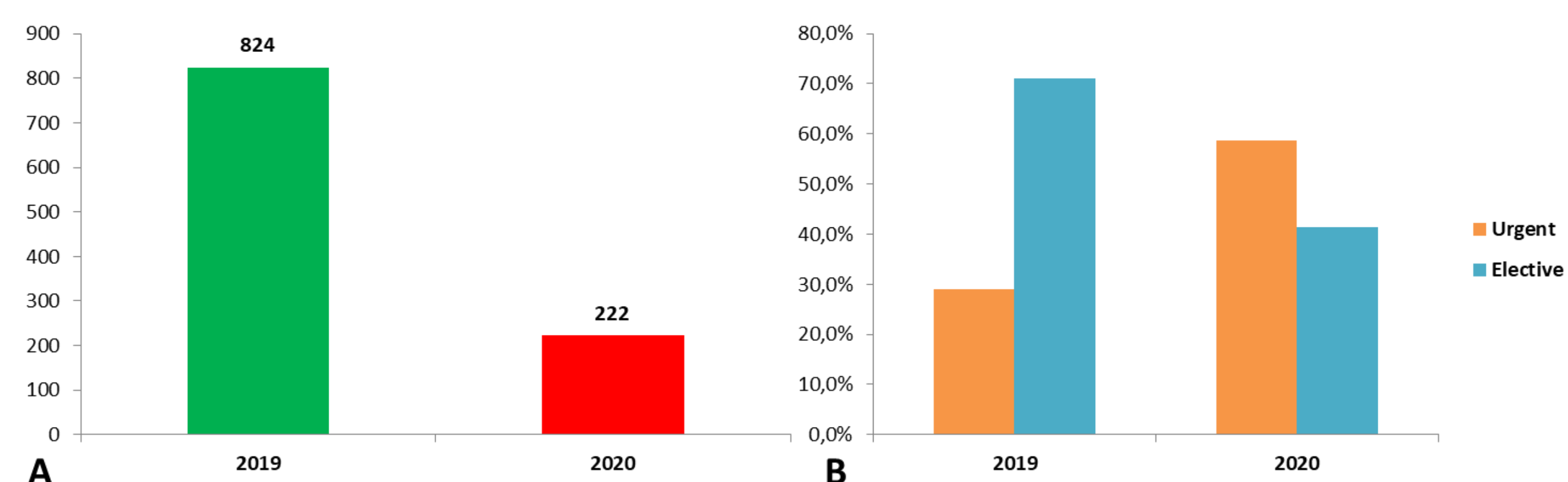


Figure 3. A- Total number of Endoscopic procedures performed between March 16 and May 8 in CHVNG/E during 2019 and 2020; B- Urgent/Elective procedures according to 2019 or 2020, $p < 0.001$.

CONCLUSIONS

The advent of the COVID-19 outbreak has led to important changes among Gastroenterology activities in Portugal, and national gastroenterology units are complying with the recommendations. Portuguese Gastroenterologists believed that the decrease in endoscopic activity can compromise residents’ education and training. The gastroenterology department at CHVNG/E has shown a significant reduction in the number of endoscopic procedures performed during the same period from 2019 to 2020.