



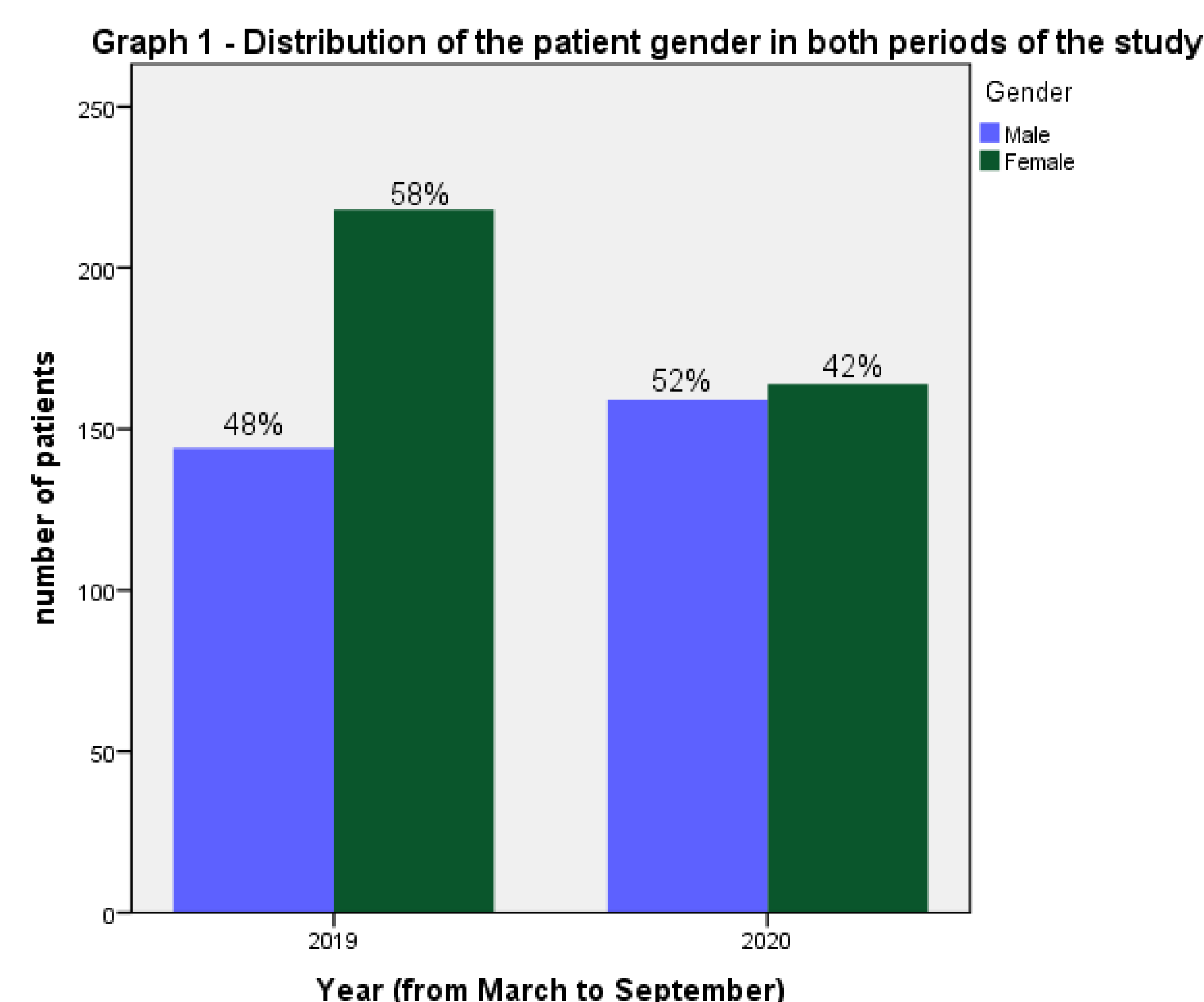
Collaborative Care Service for Psychiatric Disorders in a General Hospital Emergency Department: what has changed in the patients profile in the context for COVID-19 pandemic?



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BACKGROUND: Since the end of 2019, with the emergence of COVID-19 in China, all emergency departments (ED) have undergone major changes in their patient flow¹. Initially, there was a great decrease in the demand for health services due to social distance, however, this isolation, the stress resulting from the pandemic and the reduced access to outpatient consultations are also risk factors for the appearance of psychiatric symptoms and / or decompensation of previous disease².

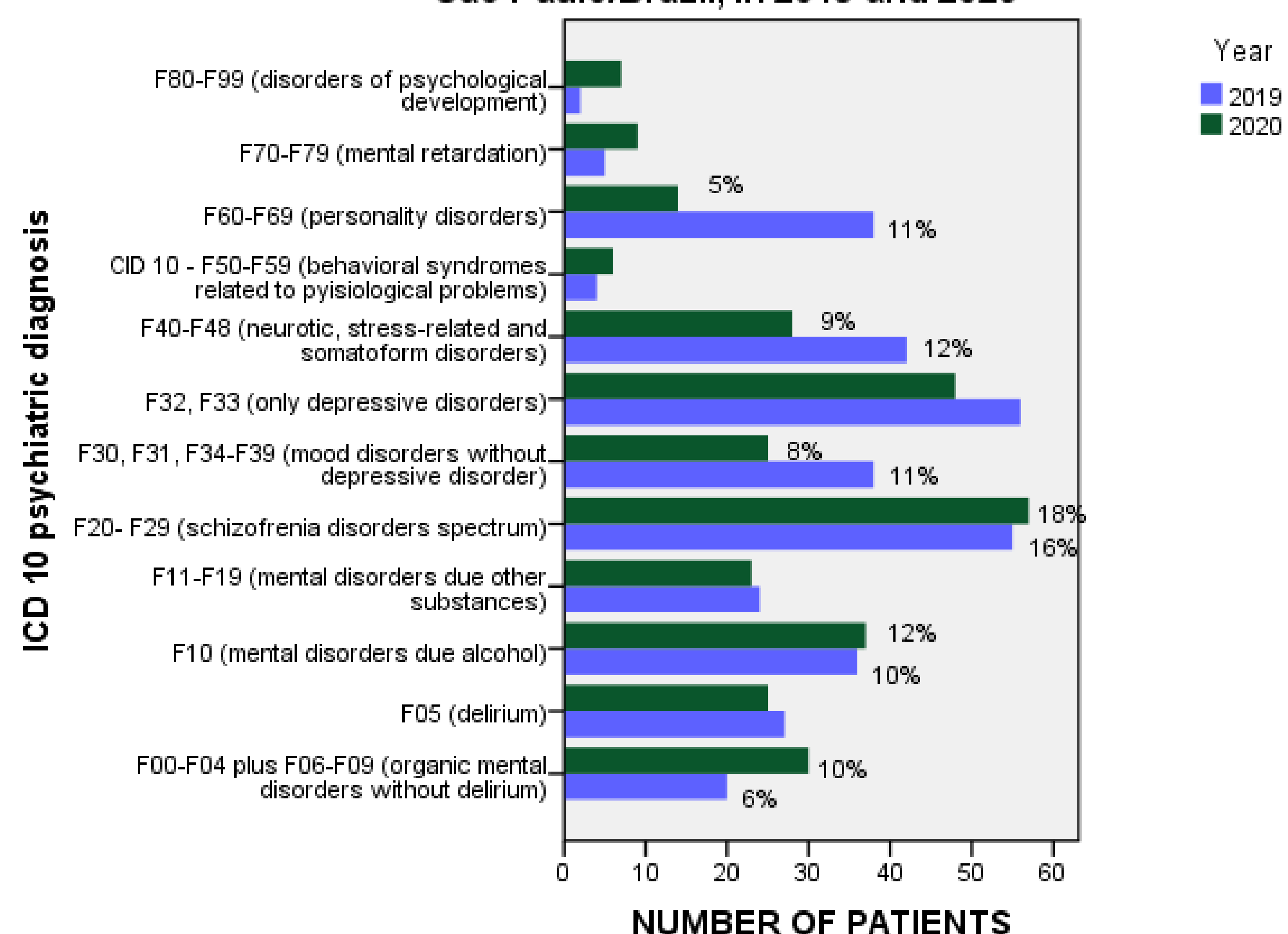
OBJECTIVE: This study aims to identify the changes in psychiatric patients' profiles evaluated by the Collaborative Care for the Psychiatric Disorders Service (CoCarePsy) of a general ED (GED) at a university hospital during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sao Paulo, Brazil (from March 1st to September 30rd of 2020) in comparison to the same period in 2019 .



METHODS:

- ✓ **Setting:** ED from the general hospital at Federal University of Sao Paulo/Brazil
- ✓ **Design:**
 - It was compared the psychiatric profile of the referred patients to the CoCarePsy in two periods - from March 1st to September 30rd of 2019 and the same period at 2020 (the first wave of COVID-19 in Brazil).
 - Psychiatric profile means psychiatric diagnosis, psychiatric management for patients with *delirium*, suicide, alcohol withdrawal and psychomotor agitation
 - The CoCarePsy receives requests from the emergency departments (Medical Clinic, Emergency Room, and other specialties), and monitors the services coming from the institution's psychiatric emergency, which is located in another university building (PsyED -psychiatric emergency department).
- ✓ **Statistical analysis:** The data were compared using Chi-Square and T-student test.

GRAPH 3 - Distribution of the patients' psychiatric disorders who were referred to a collaborative care psychiatric service at a university hospital in Sao Paulo/Brazil, in 2019 and 2020



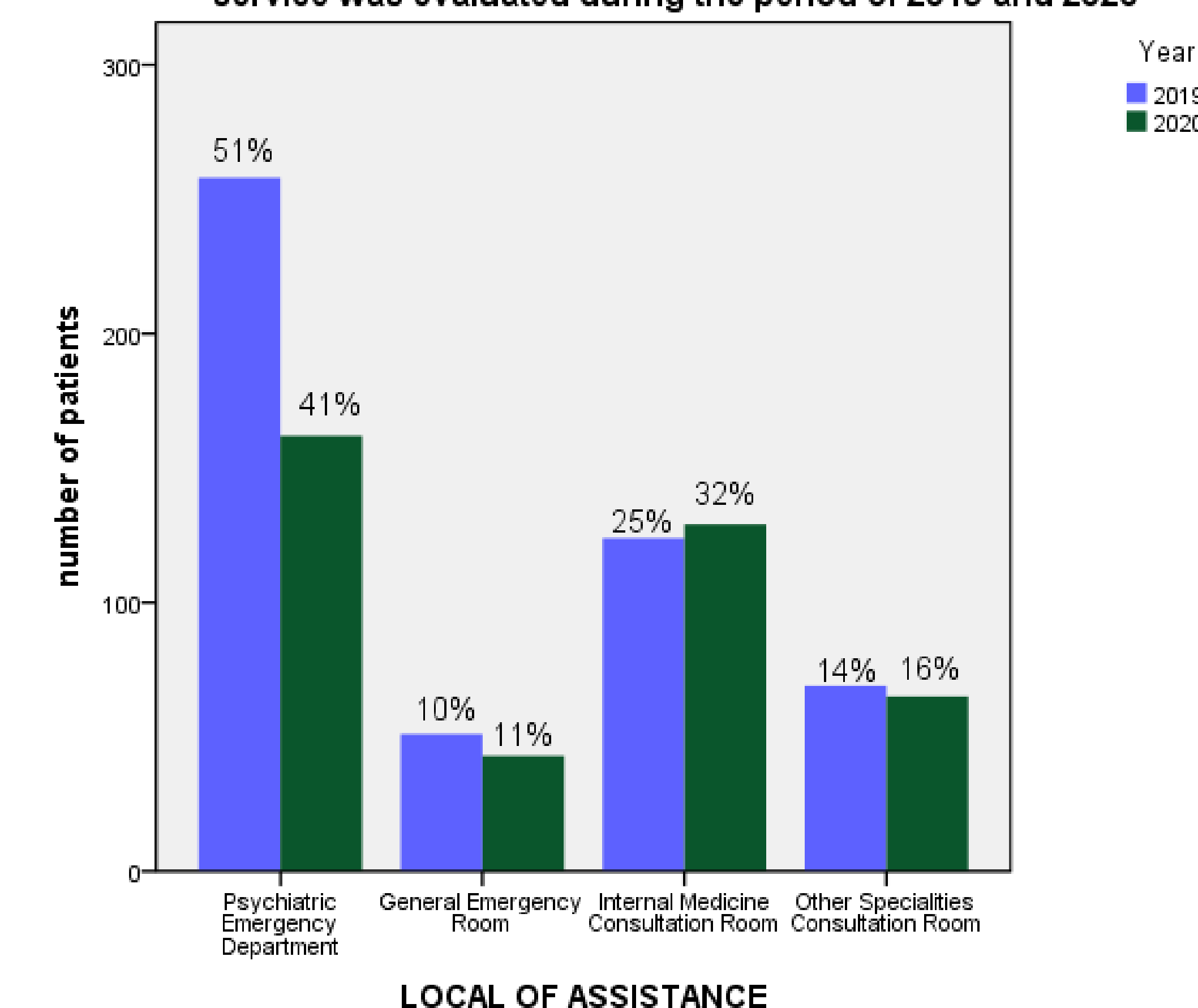
RESULTS

- ✓ 502 patients were referred to the CoCarePsy in the 2019 period, and in the 2020 period this number decreased by 20.5% (total number=399).
- ✓ **Graph 1** - While in 2019 there were 48% of male patients, in 2020 they were 58% ($p < 0.01$).
- ✓ **Graph 2** - Patients were referred to the CoCarePsy mainly from the PsyED and it was sustained in 2020, but with significant differences ($p < 0.01$):
 - In 2020, the PsyED sent to the GED only 41% of patients in relation to 51% in 2019
 - Patients from the General Emergency Room, Internal Medicine Consultation Room and Other Specialties Consultation Room were more predominant in 2020.
- ✓ **Graph 3** - The mental disorders were also consistently different between periods of 2020 and 2019 ($p < 0.05$):
 - There was an slightly increase of dementia and other organic disorders, alcohol withdrawal syndrome and psychotic disorders
 - There was a decrease of mood and neurotic/stress-related disorders and the personality disorders.
- ✓ The use of psychotropic medication was increased, from 62% in 2019 to 80% in 2020 ($p < 0.001$).
- There was a significant reduction in the application of the suicide management protocol ($p < 0.001$), which did not happen with the others.

DISCUSSION:

- ✓ The pandemic period with social isolation caused a contingent of patients not to seek ED, as they usually would^{1,2}.
- ✓ The results presented that patients with organic and psychotic issues kept coming, but others complied with the targeted isolation.
- ✓ This could explain the change in the gender profile and the need for psychotropic medication.
- ✓ There was a reduction in the cases referred from the PsyED, indicating a probable lower demand for this service, however the requests from the GED did not change quantitatively, but qualitatively³.

Graph 2 - Local of assistance where the patient referred to the collaborative care service was evaluated during the period of 2019 and 2020



CONCLUSION:

- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic changed the routine of health services all over the world and with psychiatric care it was no different.
- ✓ It is important to know what is happening to patients with mood, anxiety and personality disorders, if the reduction in the use of the emergency service has been beneficial or harmful to these patients.

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