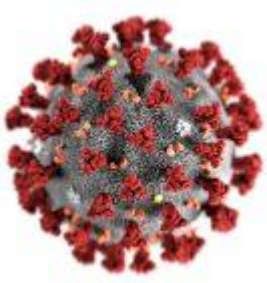
Exploring characteristics of COVID-19 to guide public health policies & therapeutic interventions.



COVID-19 remains a global health concern and is especially malicious in low- and middle-income countries, where due to lack of resources, little knowledge is typically available on the epidemiology of COVID-19 disease and dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 spread, thus hindering an effective public health response against the pandemic. In their work, recently published by the Lancet *Regional Health Europe*, Yegorov and colleagues conducted a retrospective analysis of patient medical records and performed a whole-genome SARS-CoV-2 analysis in Kazakhstan.

The study reports that COVID-19 severity and mortality in Kazakhstan were associated with older age, comorbidities, increased leukocyte counts, and male sex, with ethnicity also potentially playing an important role. The SARS-CoV-2 diversity, involving a lineage unique to Kazakhstan, points at multiple COVID-19 importations, which likely occurred earlier than currently thought.

Although these results are largely consistent with data from other regions, this is the first attempt to shed light at the correlates of COVID-19 presentation and spread in this diverse Central Asian population, using both medical records and viral

whole genome sequencing. The authors believe that these findings can facilitate public health policies and interventions not only in Kazakhstan, but also in other, neighbouring countries with similar ethnic, socio-cultural and healthcare profiles in the light of the ongoing vaccination efforts and the third pandemic wave.

Journal Article: Sergey et al., 2021. Epidemiological and Clinical Characteristics, and Virologic Features of COVID-19 Patients in Kazakhstan: A Nation-wide, Retrospective, Cohort study. Lancet Regional Health

Summary by Sergey Yegorov