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Martin Gascón Hove

European Air Transport Command, Eindhoven (The Netherlands)

Impact of COVID-19 Epidemic in the European Air Transport Command: a Retrospective Descriptive Study

Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2019 has completely changed the global health situation, with more than 760 million cases published and over 6.9 million deaths in May 2023, when its end was declared. European Air Transport Command (EATC) is an international staff, formed by seven participating nations, and among its capabilities is that of aeromedical evacuation (AE).

Material and methods

Impact of novel coronavirus was retrospectively analysed based on patient numbers and characteristics, means of transport and number of missions executed by EATC during the triennium 2020-2022.

Results

1145 patients were transported in 195 missions. Neither death nor disease contagion were reported during AE, where both open and closed systems were utilised. Niger led the list of countries of origin with 218 evacuated patients. 77 % of requests came from Italy and Germany. Airbus A310 was the most used aircraft (33.8 %). Germany transported 246 patients of nationalities other than German. 1071 of the transported patients were military individuals, mostly of priority 3 (routine), while 74 were civilians. The last COVID-19- related mission took place on the 17th of June, 2022.

Conclusions

COVID-19 has led to a surged number of AE patients, which had to be handled by EATC. AE has proven to be a safe and effective means of transport, even in critical cases, and independent of whether closed or open systems were used.

Keywords

COVID-19; aviation medicine; infection control

Biography

BA in Medicine from the Navarra University (September 1990- June 1996), Deputy of the Aeromedical Evacuation Control Centre (July 2019- present), PhD (Doctor medicinae) in the University Complutense of Madrid (October 2020), Flight Surgeon Course (January-February 2018), Specialty in Hospital Emergencies (November 2017), Hyperbaric Medicine Course (November 2015), Master degree in Laparoscopic Advanced Surgery (H. U. Ramón y Cajal, January- June 2008), Specialty in General Surgery (H. U. Puerta de Hierro, July 2003-July 2008), Advanced Trauma Life Support (September 2007)