TRANSCOV, a multidisciplinary project to evaluate
long distance COVID patients transfers

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Conclusions:
Initial results indicate that effective collaborations led to the
selection of clinically eligible patients and the realisation of safe
distant transfers.

Key messages:
- Healthcare organisations have been able to adapt and create
  organizational innovations to respond to COVID-19.
- Multidisciplinary approaches are appropriate to evaluate
  such complex innovations.

Background:
Faced with an abrupt surge of severe COVID patients in March
and April 2020, intensive care units (ICU) from four French
regions transferred around 660 patients towards six other
regions and four neighbouring countries. The intensity and the
diversity of the vectors used (plane, helicopter, train,
ambulance), during this wave of medical evacuations make it
an unprecedented event. The aim of TRANSCOV is to
examine the impact of long distance transfers on patient’s
health and to understand how actors collaborated to overcome
clinical and logistical challenges.

Methods:
TRANSCOV is made of three disciplinary components: 1)
interviews with clinicians and health authorities staff involved
in the organisation and realisation of the transfers as part of
the qualitative component; 2) a retrospective cohort collecting
clinical parameters and pathway details before during and after
transfer; 3) a collection of data regarding human and logistical
resources mobilised during transfers as part of an economical
evaluation.

Results:
Preliminary results indicate that prior experience in medical
evacuations proved useful to collaborate effectively in the
exceptional circumstances prevailing in spring 2020. Clinicians
had to establish quickly eligibility criteria for transfer. Actors’
opinions may vary on the appropriateness of vectors to
transfer isolated (e.g. via helicopter) or grouped (train)
patients. Early epidemiological data suggest that transferred
patients were younger and experienced comparable, if not
lower, in-hospital mortality compared to other patients. The
economic evaluation is in progress.