Analysis of Epidemiological and Clinical features in older patients with Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) out of Wuhan

Jiangshan Lian¹, Xi Jin², Shaorui Hao¹, Huan Cai¹, Shanyan Zhang¹, Lin Zheng¹, Hongyu Jia¹, Jianhua Hu¹, Jianguo Gao², Yimin Zhang¹, Xiaoli Zhang¹, Guodong Yu¹, Xiaoyan Wang¹, Jueqing Gu¹, Chanyuan Ye¹, Ciliang Jin¹, Yingfeng Lu¹, Xia Yu¹, Xiaopeng Yu¹, Yue Ren², Yunqing Qiu¹, Lanjuan Li¹, Jifang Sheng¹, and Yida Yang¹*

¹State Key Laboratory for Diagnosis and Treatment of Infectious Diseases, National Clinical Research Center for Infectious Diseases, Collaborative Innovation Center for Diagnosis and Treatment of Infectious Diseases, Department of Infectious Diseases, The First Affiliated Hospital, College of Medicine, Zhejiang University

²Department of Gastroenterology, the First Affiliated Hospital, College of Medicine, Zhejiang University

*Corresponding author:

Yi-Da Yang, MD, Department of Infection Disease, The First Affiliated Hospital, College of Medicine, Zhejiang University, 79 Qingchun Rd., Hangzhou City 310003, China
(yangyida65@163.com 86-0571-872366749)
**Summary:** Older patients with COVID-19 had significantly higher rate of female gender, high temperature, familiar clustering, co-existing of basic diseases, dyspnea, lymphocytopenia, severe/critical type and ICU admission; higher level of AST, CK, LDH, CRP and lower level of haemoglobin, albumin.
Abstract

BACKGROUND: The outbreak of COVID-19 has become a big threat to China, with high contagious capacity and varied mortality. This study aimed to investigate the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of older patients with COVID-19 out of Wuhan.

METHODS: A retrospective study was performed, with collecting data from medical records of confirmed COVID-19 patients in Zhejiang province from Jan 17 to Feb 12, 2020. Epidemiological, clinical and treatment data were analyzed between those older (≥60y) and younger (<60y) patients.

RESULTS: Total 788 patients with confirmed COVID-19 were selected, where 136 were older patients with corresponding age of 68.28y ± 7.314y. There was a significantly higher frequency of women in the older patients compared with the younger patients (57.35% vs 46.47%, P=0.021). The presence of coexisting medical condition was significantly higher in older patients compared with younger patients (55.15% vs 21.93%, P<0.001), including the rate of hypertension, diabetes, heart diseases and COPD. Significantly higher rates of severe (older vs younger groups: 16.18% vs 5.98%, P<0.001)/critical (8.82% vs 0.77%, P<0.001) type, shortness of breath (12.50% vs 3.07%, P<0.001) and high temperature of >39.0°C (13.97% vs 7.21%, P=0.010) were observed in older patients compared with younger patients. Finally, Higher rates of ICU admission (9.56% vs 1.38%, P<0.001) and methylprednisolone application (28.68% vs 9.36%, P<0.001) were also identified in older patients.
CONCLUSIONS: The specific epidemiological and clinical features of older COVID-19 patients included significantly higher female gender, body temperature, co-existing of basic diseases and rate of severe and critical type.
COVID-19 is a novel identified infectious disease with rapid human to human transmission capacity and varied fatality, due to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), multi-organ failure and other serious complications[1-3]. Since first reported in Dec 1 as the pneumonia for unknown reason, the pathogen of COVID-19 was later identified by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from the throat swab sample of a patient, and was subsequently named SARS-CoV-2 by WHO[4]. Though huge efforts have been made by Chinese government even including quarantining Wuhan city on Jan 23, its accelerated dissemination has appeared, infecting 68584 patients in China by Feb 15, 2020 and spreading over the world. Currently, combating COVID-19 is the most important and first task for China, which also raises global alert.

Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface, with known species of 229E, NL63, OC43, HKU1, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and middle east respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), where the latter two are zoonotic in origin and have been linked to lethal diseases[5, 6]. SARS-CoV-2 was the 7th identified coronavirus with human infection capacity. The high mortality rate in older patients especially those with co-morbidities of hypertension, diabetes and renal failure, had been reported both in SARS and MERS[7, 8]. Calculating from Initial data of Wuhan, we found that the fatality for the COVID-19 patients aged ≥60 was 63.6%[1]. Previous study from SARS also suggested that older age was one of the strongest predictor of poor outcome[9]. Nevertheless, the specific features of older patients with COVID-19 out of Wuhan has not been reported hitherto.

By Feb 15, 2020, Zhejiang province had the 4th largest cases of 1167 confirmed COVID-19 in China. Comparing with disease features in Wuhan, Zhejiang province had much lower
severe/critical cases (76/1167, 6.5%) and higher rate of discharge from hospital (437/1167, 37.4%), with no reported death case. It is well acknowledged that older patients tend to have more serious diseases and complications, where previous study also indicated the higher ICU admission rate in patients with median age > 66y[10]. However, there are no reports specifically focusing on older patients with COVID-19. We aimed, in this study, to provide the first line information about the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of 136 older patients (≥60y) with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in Zhejiang province.

**Methods**

**Data sources and ethics**

We retrospectively investigated the epidemiological, clinical, imaging, and laboratory characteristics of confirmed cases of COVID-19 with WHO interim guidance in Zhejiang province from Jan 17 to Feb 12, 2020. All patients were diagnosed as COVID-19 by positive PCR result. The data was uniformly collected by the Health Commission of Zhejiang province, where all patients were allocated at specific hospitals for unified treatment according to the government emergency rule. The diagnosis was based on WHO interim guidance and all data were shared with WHO[4], with the primary analytic results reported to the authority of Zhejiang province. Since cases collection and analysis were determined by the Health Commission of Zhejiang province under national authorization and considered as part of the continuing public health outbreak investigation, our study was regarded exempt from institutional review board approval.

During analysis, patients were divided into two groups according to age (older group≥60y vs younger group<60y). The subtype definition of COVID-19 patients was based on the
diagnosis and treatment scheme for COVID-19 of Chinese (5th edition), as previously reported[11]. In detail, the degree of COVID-19 was categorized as mild, severe, or critical. Mild type included non-pneumonia and mild pneumonia cases. Severe type was characterized by dyspnea, respiratory frequency ≥30/minute, blood oxygen saturation ≤93%, PaO₂/FiO₂ ratio <300, and/or lung infiltrates >50% within 24–48 hours. Critical cases were those that exhibited respiratory failure, septic shock, and/or multiple organ dysfunction/failure.

**Procedures**

The epidemiological, demographic, clinical, laboratory and management data from patients’ medical records were retrieved and reviewed by two independent observers. The clinical outcomes were followed up to Feb 12, 2020. Missing or vague date were confirmed by direct communicating with health care providers. Laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 was done in the CDC of Zhejiang province and local city level and the First Affiliated Hospital, School of Medicine, Zhejiang University, with national authorization. Throat-swab specimens from upper respiratory tract and sputum from all patients at admission were maintained in viral-transport medium. COVID-19 was confirmed by real-time RT-PCR using the same protocol described previously [2]. Other common respiratory viruses including influenza A and B virus, respiratory syncytial virus, parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, SARS and MERS were routinely precluded. All patients received chest x-rays or chest CT at admission.

**Outcomes**

The epidemiological data were collected, including exposure to Wuhan, contacting with confirmed patients and family clustering. The incubation period is calculated from the specific date of contacting with confirmed COVID-19 patient to the date of illness onset.
Other important parameters were also summarized, including the anthropometrics/demographic data, symptoms/signs on admission, laboratory and chest X-ray/CT results, comorbidity, co-infection with other respiratory pathogens treatment (including drugs, intensive care and mechanical ventilation) and clinical outcomes.

**Statistical analysis**

Mean (SD) and median (IQR) were used for continuous variables with and without normal distribution while number (%) was used for categorical variables, followed by Mann-Whitney U and chi-square test for comparison. For laboratory results, whether the measurements were outside the normal range was also analyzed. The Kaplan–Meier method was used to estimate hospitalization time, and the log rank test was applied for comparisons between the younger and older groups. The Kaplan–Meier analysis was conducted with survfit function in the library of survival in R (3.6.1). A two-sided $\alpha$ of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant and SPSS (version 26.0) was used for all analyses.

**Results**

**Demographic and epidemiologic Characteristics**

This study described 788 patients with confirmed COVID-19 from Jan 17, 2020 to Feb 12, 2020 in Zhejiang province. As shown in Table 1, there were 136 and 652 patients in older and younger groups, with corresponding age of 68.28y±7.314y and 41.15y±11.38y. There was no significant difference in the percentage of current smoker in two groups. However, there was a significantly higher frequency of women in the older patients compared to the younger patients (female in older vs younger group: 57.35% vs 46.47%, $P=0.021$), indicating the sex predisposition to female in older patients with COVID-19. The presence of any coexisting medical condition was significantly higher in older patients compared to the
younger patients (older vs younger groups: 55.15% vs 21.93%, \(P<0.001\)), including the rate of hypertension (38.97% vs 11.20%, \(P<0.001\)), diabetes (17.65% vs 5.06%, \(P<0.001\)), heart diseases (4.41% vs 0.77%, \(P=0.005\)) and COPD (2.21% vs 0%, \(P=0.005\)). Based on data from definite exposure date to epidemic area (Wuhan), we found more patients had a history of traveling to Wuhan in younger group compared to older group (older vs younger groups: 31.62% vs 53.68%, \(P<0.001\)). More patients in older group had confirmed cluster history of contacting with patients from local area compared to patients in younger group (older vs younger groups: 33.09% vs 23.01%, \(P<0.001\)).

Thirty-two and 156 patients from older and younger groups had definite exposure time and their calculated median incubation period was 5 days for both groups. Differing from patients of younger group, significantly more patients in older group were diagnosed as severe (older vs younger groups: 16.18% vs 5.98%, \(P<0.001\)) and critical (8.82% vs 0.77%, \(P<0.001\)) types.

**Clinical Features and Laboratory Abnormalities**

The clinical characteristics of the patients were shown in Table 2. Briefly, fever and cough were the most common symptoms in both group. There were no significant differences in the percentages of fever, cough, sputum production, GI symptoms, muscle ache and headache in two group. However, Older patients had significantly higher rate of shortness of breath (older vs younger groups: 12.50% vs 3.07%, \(P<0.001\)) and lower rate of nasal obstruction (older vs younger groups: 1.47% vs 6.90%, \(P=0.015\)) when compared with younger patients. Besides, older patients had significantly lower and higher rates of normal (\(T<37.3^\circ\text{C}\)) and high (\(38^\circ\text{C} \leq T \leq 39^\circ\text{C}\)) temperature (older vs younger groups: 10.29% vs 21.17%, \(P=0.003\); 40.44% vs 29.60%, \(P=0.013\)). For extreme high fever, older patients also had significantly higher rate of
high temperature (T>39°C) (older vs younger groups: 13.97% vs 7.21%, P=0.010) than that in younger patients.

On admission, significantly more patients in older group had lymphocytopenia (older vs younger groups: 30.88% vs 14.11%, P<0.001) and lower level of haemoglobin (older vs younger groups: 129g/L vs 140g/L, P<0.001). Furthermore, there were significantly decreased level of albumin (older vs younger groups: 39.2g/L vs 41.7g/L, P<0.001), elevated level of aspartate aminotransferase (older vs younger groups: 28U/L vs 24U/L, P=0.002), increased level of creatine kinase (74.5U/L vs 67.0U/L, P=0.039) and lactate dehydrogenase (244.0U/L vs 204.0U/L, P<0.001) in older group. Concerning infection-related parameters, C-reactive protein (CRP) was significantly increased in older group than that in younger group (older vs younger groups: 19.0mg/L vs 6.75mg/L, P<0.001). CT scan is pivotal for disease identification and diagnosis, significantly more patients in the older group presented multiple mottling and ground-glass opacity.

**Treatment and outcomes**

COVID-19 patients were isolated in designated hospitals with supportive and empiric medication. There were 117 patients (86.03%) in older group and 551 (84.51%) patients in younger group administrated with antiviral treatment, with a median period from onset of illness to antiviral therapy of 3 days and median antiviral duration of 11 days for both groups. There were 192 and 43 patients received zInterferon-α sprays, lopinavir and ritonavir 2 tablets (500 mg) twice daily and arbidol hydrochloride capsules (2 tablets three times daily); 140 and 25 patients received Interferon-α sprays and Lopinavir/Ritonavir; 61 and 12 patients received Lopinavir/Ritonavir and Arbidol; 31 and 10 patients received Interferon-α sprays and Arbidol, in younger group and older group respectively. There were no difference regarding the antiviral regimen between two groups. Glucocorticoid therapy is considered if
PaO2/FiO2 <300 mmHg and is not recommended for mild patients. Dose of Glucocorticoid is 0.75-1.5mg/kg.d and the median duration of corticosteroid therapy was 15 days. Compared with patient in younger group, more patient in older group (26.68% vs 9.36%, p<0.001) received corticosteroid therapy.

Older patients had higher rate of severe (older vs younger groups: 16.18% vs 5.98%, P<0.001) and critical (8.82% vs 0.77%, P<0.001) type compared. 788 patients were divided into two groups according to exposure history to Wuhan. There were 393 and 395 patients with and without Wuhan exposure history in the last month, respectively. We found that there was no significant difference in the rate of severe and critical type (with vs without Wuhan exposure, 7.89% vs 7.59%, P=0.895; 2.04 vs 2.28%, P=1.000) between the two groups.

Oxygen therapy plays an important role in supportive care of patients. In this study, 6.62% patients in older group received mechanical ventilation, significantly higher than that of 1.38% in younger group (P =0.001). The ventilator adopted P-SIMV mode, with the inhaled oxygen concentration of 35-100% and the positive end-expiratory pressure of 6-12 cm H2O. Meanwhile, significantly more patients in older group (9.56% vs 1.38%, P <0.001) were admitted into ICU compared to younger group by Feb 12, 2020. Till now, no patients received continuous blood purification due to renal failure and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO). Liver injury was the most common complication, followed by ARDS and acute kidney injury. Significantly more patients in older patients group developed ARDS than that in the younger group (16.9% vs 5.37%, P <0.001). By the end of Feb 12, all patients were survived and significantly more patients in younger group (44.6% vs 22.8%, P <0.001) had discharged than those in older group (Figure 1).
Discussion

COVID-19 is a novel identified human infectious disease, belonging to the family of coronavirus[12]. Starting from 788 confirmed cases from Zhejiang province, we found that the age of patients spanned from infant of 3 month to elder of 96 year, where 136 cases were over 60 year. Differing from young patients, 68.3% older patients had no history of Wuhan traveling and 86.3% older patients were exposed to COVID-19 patients, with median incubation period of 5 days (IQR:2-9). More importantly, there were 49.5% of patients infected by family clustering and social activities, where 5 couples infected each other, 6 patients got infection after attending ritual in local temple, 5 patients got infection after dinner party and some were infected by square dancing. The other reason may rely on the inadequate recognition of COVID-19 by elders, with lower rates of mask wearing. The explanation for the phenomenon of significantly higher ratio of female in elder group may rely on the finding that ACE2 expression of rat lung was significantly higher in Female than that in male[13].

This study confirmed that features of COVID-19 in older adults resembled other forms of CAP. COVID-19 from older group had higher rates of coexisting basic diseases, where hypertension, diabetes, chronic heart disease and COPD reaching statistical significance. On admission, the rate of severe/critical type was significantly higher in older group than that in younger group. Fever, cough and dyspnea are the common symptoms of acute CAP and there was no significant difference in the rate of fever between two groups. However, the ratio of > 38℃ was significantly higher in older than that in younger group. It is well acknowledged that the degree of high fever is associated with inflammatory cytokine secretion and the clinical symptoms.
There were no significant differences of cough, sputum production, hemoptysis, sore throat, nasal obstruction, muscle ache, fatigue and GI tract symptoms between older and younger groups. In contrast, the rate of shortness of breath was significantly higher in older group, which is in accordance with more severe lung CT findings of multiple mottling and ground-glass opacity and more ARDS in those patients. The heart injury was also more common in older group, as reflected by significantly increased AST and LDH levels. The rates of low albumin and Hemoglobin levels were significantly higher in older group, which may be related with poor nutrition and disease progression.

Currently, there was no effective anti-viral therapy for COVID-19[14]. We used Interferon-α, Lopinavir/Ritonavir and Arbidol for virus inhibition according to previous clinical experience but the unified treatment plan is still lack. A retrospective study revealed that proper use of corticosteroid in confirmed critical SARS resulted in lowered mortality and shorter hospitalization stay[15]. Another study also showed that low-to-moderate-dose corticosteroids might reduce mortality of influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 viral pneumonia patients with PaO2 /FiO2 <300 mm Hg[16]. In this study, corticosteroid therapy was initiated if COVID-19 patients with PaO2/FiO2<300mmHg had quicker disease progression, higher temperature and more lung inflammatory exudation, their glucocorticoid application rate (28.68%) was significantly higher than that in younger patients (9.36%). To avoid side effects of corticosteroid, its dosage was decreased into 40-80 mg/daily. Until now, only two cases of GI tract bleeding and 10 cases of hyperglycemia were identified in this study, with no secondary bacteria and fungi infection. Therefore, the application of antibiotics and anti-fungi drugs was also lower in Zhejiang province than in Wuhan.

Previous study[9] showed that 21% SARS patients were over 60y and accounted for 68% of all deaths related to SARS. The 30- and 150-day mortality rates in >60y SARS patients were 56% and 60%, respectively. In this study, we found that 32% confirmed COVID-19
patients were >60y who had 25% severe/critical type in admission. Those elder patients of severe/critical type accounted for 43% of the total severe/critical type in our study.

Comparing with SARS, the mortality of COVID-19 was much lower. Comparing with Wuhan, the number of COVID-19 patients in Zhejiang province was also much lower and the medical resources were more abundant, contributing to the earlier diagnosis, quarantine and treatment of those patients. Till Feb 12, 2020, there were total 322 COVID-19 patients discharged from hospital and no death case was reported. According to accumulated reports from Wuhan, the rate of severe/critical type and mortality were relatively high, reaching 15% in one study[2]. Additionally, another study revealed that the median age for ICU and non-ICU patients were 66y and 51y, with mortality of 4.3%[10]. We compared COVID-19 patients of Zhejiang province with and without Wuhan exposure history and found no significant differences in clinical and virological features (unpublished preliminary data).

Additionally, for COVID-19 patients of Zhejiang province, the median time was 2 days (1-4 day), 4 days (2-7 day) and 3 days (1-7 day) for illness onset to outpatient clinics visit, confirmed diagnosis and isolation therapy. In Wuhan, the official estimated median time for illness onset to hospital admission was 9.84 days, which may be caused by the shortage of health care resources.

Our study has several limitations. Firstly, the retrospective design of this study may decrease its credibility and future perspective cohort study should be considered. Secondly, the comprehensive analysis of older patients with COVID-19 on national level is urgently needed, which will provide data that are more reliable. Thirdly, though we summarized the application of antiviral therapy and glucocorticoids usage in the older patients with COVID-19, it is still lack of randomized clinical trials to provide high quality evidence. Finally, the data regarding the outcomes of older patients with COVID-19 need to be further investigated, for most older patients were still under treatment in hospital.
In summary, we reported the specific epidemiological and clinical features of older patients with COVID-19, including significantly higher female gender, body temperature, familiar clustering, co-existing of basic diseases and rate of severe/critical type.
Notes

Author contributions. Jiangshan Lian, Xi Jin, Shaorui Hao, Huan Cai, Shanyan Zhang contributed equally to this article. Yida Yang, Jifang Sheng, Lanjuan Li and Yunqing Qiu designed the study, Jiangshan Lian, Xi Jin, Shaorui Hao coordinated the work and took the lead in drafting the manuscript and interpreting, Huan Cai, Shanyan Zhang developed the statistical methods, Lin Zheng, Hongyu Jia, Jianhua Hu, Jianguo Gao, Yimin Zhang, Xiaoli Zhang, Guodong Yu, Xiaoyan Wang, Jueqing Gu, Chanyuan Ye1, Ciliang Jin, Yingfeng Lu, Xia Yu, Xiaopeng Yu and Yue Ren were Participated in the collection of experimental data. Yida Yang and Jifang Sheng reviewed the manuscript prior to submission. The corresponding author attests that all listed authors meet authorship criteria and that no others meeting the criteria have been omitted.

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| Characteristic          | Age <60 (n=652) | Age ≥ (n=136) | P Value |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|
| **Age**                | 41.15±11.38     | 68.28±7.314   | <0.001  |
| **Sex (Female)**       | 303/652 (46.47%)| 78/136 (57.35%)| 0.021   |
| **Current Smoker**     | 46/652 (7.06%)  | 8/136 (5.88%) | 0.622   |

### Coexisting Condition

| Condition              | Age <60 (n=652) | Age ≥ (n=136) | P Value |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|
| **Any**                | 143/652 (21.93%)| 75/136 (55.15%)| <0.001  |
| **Hypertension**       | 73/652 (11.20%) | 53/136 (38.97%)| <0.001  |
| **Diabetes**           | 33/652 (5.06%)  | 24/136 (17.65%)| <0.001  |
| **Chronic liver disease** | 25/652 (3.83%) | 6/136 (4.41%) | 0.753   |
| **Cancer**             | 3/652 (0.46%)   | 3/136 (2.21%) | 0.067   |
| **Chronic renal disease** | 5/652 (0.77%)  | 2/136 (1.47%) | 0.347   |
| **Heart disease**      | 5/652 (0.77%)   | 6/136 (4.41%) | 0.005   |
| **COPD**               | 0/652 (0%)      | 3/136 (2.21%) | 0.005   |
| **Immunosuppression**  | 0/652 (0%)      | 1/136 (0.74%) | 0.173   |

### Exposure History

| Condition               | Age <60 (n=652) | Age ≥ (n=136) | P Value |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|
| **From Wuhan**          | 350/652 (53.68%)| 43/136 (31.62%)| <0.001  |
| **Contact with patients** | 269/652 (41.26%)| 63/136 (46.32%)| 0.276   |
| **Cluster**             | 150/652 (23.01%)| 45/136 (33.09%)| 0.013   |

**Timing from onset of illness to consultation**

| Time Frame | Age <60 | Age ≥ | P Value |
|------------|---------|-------|---------|
| 1-4        | 2       | 2     | 0.867   |
| 2-7        | 4       | 4     | 0.410   |
illness to confirm the
diagnosis

| Timing from onset of illness to hospitalization | 3(1-7) | 3(1-6) | 0.945 |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|

Clinical Type on admission

| Clinical Type | 44/652 (6.75%) | 33/136 (24.26%) | <0.001 |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|--------|
| Severe/Critical Type |        |                  |        |
| Mild          | 608/652 (93.25%) | 102/136 (75.0 %) | <0.001 |
| Severe        | 39/652 (5.98%)  | 22/136 (16.18%) | <0.001 |
| Critical      | 5/652 ((0.77%) | 12/136 (8.82)  | <0.001 |

Data are presented as medians (interquartile ranges, IQR), n (%) and n/N (%).
Table 2. Clinical Features and Selected Laboratory Abnormalities of older COVID-19 Patients

| Characteristic      | Age <60(n=652) | Age≥ (n=136) | P Value |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------|---------|
| Fever               | 521/652 (79.91%) | 115/136 (84.56 %) | 0.211   |
| <37.3               | 138/652(21.17%)  | 14/136 (10.29%) | 0.003   |
| 37.3-38.0           | 274/652 (42.02%) | 48/136 (35.29%) | 0.146   |
| 38.1-39.0           | 193/652 (29.60%) | 55/136(40.44%)  | 0.013   |
| >39.0               | 47/652 (7.21%)   | 19/136 (13.97%) | 0.010   |
| Cough               | 421/652 (64.57%) | 85/136 (62.50%) | 0.647   |
| Sputum production   | 216/652 (33.13%) | 49/136 (36.03%) | 0.515   |
| Hemoptysis          | 12/652 (1.84%)   | 3/136 (2.21%)   | 0.732   |
| Condition                      | Cases in Group A | Cases in Group B | p-value |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| Sore throat                   | 94/652 (14.42%)  | 17/136 (12.50%) | 0.559   |
| Nasal obstruction             | 45/652 (6.90%)   | 2/136 (1.47%)   | 0.015   |
| Muscle ache                   | 71/652 (10.89%)  | 20/136 (14.71%) | 0.205   |
| Fatigue                       | 115/652 (17.64%) | 24/136 (17.65%) | 0.998   |
| Shortness of breath           | 20/652 (3.07%)   | 17/136 (12.50%) | <0.001  |
| GI symptoms                   | 77/652 (11.81%)  | 11/136 (8.09%)  | 0.210   |
| headache                      | 67/652 (10.28%)  | 8/136 (5.88%)   | 0.112   |

**Blood routine**

| Test                        | Cases in Group A | Cases in Group B | p-value |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| Leucocytes(×10^9/L; normal)  | 4.8(3.8-5.9)    | 4.8(3.9-6.4)    | 0.236   |
| >10 ×10^9/L                  | 9/652 (1.38%)   | 9/136 (6.62%)   | 0.001   |
| <4 ×10^9/L                   | 196/652 (30.06%)| 38/136 (27.94%)| 0.623   |
| Neutrophils(×10^9/L; normal) | 2.9(2.2-3.9)    | 3.2(2.5-4.4)    | 0.002   |
| Lymphocytes(×10^9 /L; normal)| 1.2(0.9-1.6)    | 1.1(0.7-1.4)    | <0.001  |
| Haemoglobin(g/L; normal      | 140.0(129.0-152.0)| 129.0(120.3-140.8) | <0.001 |
| Hematokrit(%; normal range   | 41.0%(38.1%-44.4%) | 38.3%(35.5%-41.3%) | 0.004  |

**Platelets(×10^9/L; normal range** 83-303)

| Test                        | Cases in Group A | Cases in Group B | p-value |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| <100×10^9/L                  | 20/652 (3.07%)  | 7/136 (5.15%)   | 0.295   |
| Haemoglobin(g/L; normal      | 140.0(129.0-152.0)| 129.0(120.3-140.8) | <0.001 |
| Hematokrit(%; normal range   | 41.0%(38.1%-44.4%) | 38.3%(35.5%-41.3%) | 0.004  |
**Coagulation function**

|                      | Value 1             | Value 2             | p-value |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|
| International normalized ratio(normal range 0.85-1.15) | 1.02(0.97-1.09)    | 1.03(0.96-1.07)    | 0.567   |

**Blood biochemistry**

| Component                        | Value 1             | Value 2             | p-value |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Albumin(g/L; normal range 40-55) | 41.7(39.0-44.1)    | 39.2(36.0-42.0)    | <0.001  |
| Alanine aminotransferase(U/L; normal range 9-50) | 22.0(15.0-35.0)    | 21.0(16.0-29.0)    | 0.625   |
| Aspartate aminotransferase(U/L; normal range 15-40) | 24.0(19.0-32.0)    | 28.0(22.0-36.0)    | 0.002   |
| Total bilirubin(umol/L; normal range 0-26) | 9.5(7.0-13.2)      | 9.7(7.0-13.5)      | 0.802   |
| Serum sodium(mmol/L; normal range 137-147) | 138.7(136.6-140.5) | 137.0(135.0-139.1) | <0.001  |
| Serum potassium(mmol/L; normal range 3.5-5.3) | 2.8(3.6-4.1)       | 3.9(3.6-4.1)       | 0.750   |
| Blood urea nitrogen(mmol/L; normal range 3.1-8) | 3.6(2.9-4.5)       | 4.4(3.6-5.9)       | <0.001  |
| Serum creatinine(umol/L; normal range: male 57-97, female 41-73) | 66.0(55.0-77.5)    | 69.0(58.6-79.6)    | 0.013   |
| Creatine kinase(U/L; normal range 50-310) | 67.0(46.0-104.0)   | 74.5(52.3-123.0)   | 0.039   |
|                      | Median (IQR)        | Median (IQR)        | p-value |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| **Lactate dehydrogenase (U/L)** | 204.0 (165.0-255.0) | 244.0 (206.0-311.0) | <0.001 |
| **C-reactive protein (mg/L)** | 6.75 (2.0-16.9)     | 19.0 (5.6-44.7)     | <0.001 |
| **Chest x-ray/CT findings** |                     |                     |         |
| Normal               | 82/652 (12.58%)     | 5/136 (3.68%)       | 0.003   |
| Unilateral pneumonia | 149/652 (22.85%)    | 15/136 (11.03%)     | 0.002   |
| Bilateral pneumonia  | 239/652 (36.66%)    | 57/136 (41.91%)     | 0.250   |
| Multiple mottling and ground-glass opacity | 176/652 (26.99%) | 59/136 (43.38%) | <0.001 |

Data are presented as medians (interquartile ranges, IQR), n (%) and n/N (%).
Table 3. Treatment and outcomes in older COVID-19 Patients

| Variable                        | Age <60 (n=652) | Age≥ (n=136) | Value   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|
| **Complications**               |                 |              |         |
| Acute respiratory distress      | 35/652 (5.37%)  | 23/136 (16.91%) | <0.001 |
| Septic Shock                    | 1/652 (0.15%)   | 1/136 (0.74%) | 0.316  |
| liver function abnormality      | 72/652 (11.04%) | 10/136 (7.35%) | 0.200  |
| Acute kidney injury             | 10/652 (1.53%)  | 3/136 (2.21%) | 0.478  |
| **Treatment**                   |                 |              |         |
| Anti-coronavirus treatment      | 550/652 (84.36%)| 117/136 (86.03%) | 0.622  |
| Timing from onset of illness to antiviral therapy | 3(1-6) | 3(1-6) | 0.653  |
| Antiviral duration              | 11(7-16)        | 11(6-17)     | 0.877  |
| Antivirus regimen               | 551/652 (84.51%)| 117/136 (86.03%) | 0.793  |
| Interferon-α+ Lopinavir/Ritonavir+ Arbidol | 192/652 (29.44%) | 43/136 (31.62%) | 0.608  |
| Interferon-α+ Lopinavir/Ritonavir | 140/652 (21.47%)| 25/136 (18.38%) | 0.487  |
| Lopinavir/Ritonavir+ Arbidol    | 61/652 (9.36%)  | 12/136 (8.82%) | 1.000  |
| Interferon-α+ Arbidol           | 31/652 (4.75%)  | 10/136 (7.35%) | 0.207  |
| Intervention          | Group A (n/N: %) | Group B (n/N: %) | p-value |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| #others               | 127/652 (19.48%) | 27/136 (19.85%)  | 0.906   |
| Mechanical Ventilation| 9/652 (1.38 %)   | 9/136 ( 6.62%)   | 0.001   |
| Non-invasive          | 4/652 (0.61 %)   | 3/136 ( 2.21%)   | 0.103   |
| invasive              | 5/652 ( 0.77%)   | 6/136 ( 4.41%)   | 0.005   |
| CRRT                  | 0                | 0                |         |
| ECMO                  | 0                | 0                |         |
| Glucocorticoids       | 61/652 (9.36%)   | 39/136 (28.68%)  | <0.001  |
|                       | **Max. dosage**  | 40(40-80)        | 0.663   |
| IVIGt                 | 38/652 (5.83%)   | 24/136 (17.65%)  | <0.001  |
| Admission to intensive care unit | 9/652 (1.38%) | 13/136 (9.56%)   | <0.001  |

**Clinical outcomes**

|                      | Group A (n/N: %) | Group B (n/N: %) | p-value |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| Discharged/ Stay in hospital | 291/652 (44.60%) | 31/136 (22.80%)  | <0.001  |

Data are presented as medians (interquartile ranges, IQR), n (%) and n/N (%). *Glucocorticoid dosages were converted into an equivalent of methylprednisolone. #others include Oseltamivir, Interferon-α and Lopinavir/Ritonavir monotherapy.
Figure legends

Figure 1: Kaplan–Meier estimates of hospitalization time in younger and older groups (p=0.0022).
Figure 1

Kaplan-Meier Curve for COVID-19 hospitalization time

- Age <60
- Age ≥60

Probability of hospitalization vs. time from admission.

Number at risk:

| Time from Admission | <60 | ≥60 |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| 6                   | 850 | 656 |
| 10                  | 573 | 428 |
| 15                  | 324 | 124 |
| 20                  | 109 | 57  |
| 25                  | 7   | 2   |

p = 0.0002