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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION	1C
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS	1F
EDITORIAL NOTES .....	555
<b>ORIGINAL ARTICLES</b>	
<b>Association between Consumption of Geophagic Substance and Helminthic Infection among Pregnant Women, in Kisii County, Kenya .....</b>	<b>557</b>
G. G. Ratemo, S. K. Musyoki, B. O. Nyanhongiri	
<b>Diagnostic Correlation between General Practitioners and the Ophthalmologist in the Management of Eye Diseases .....</b>	<b>563</b>
A. A. Onyiaorah, N. N. Kizor-Akaraiwe, S. N. N. Nwosu	
<b>Clinical Presentation and Intensity of Infection with Intestinal Helminths among School Children in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.....</b>	<b>568</b>
B. O. Olopade, T. O. Charles-Eromosele, O. B. Olopade	
<b>Primary Hypertension with Target Organ Damage among Apparently Healthy Secondary School Students in Osogbo, South-Western Nigeria.....</b>	<b>573</b>
O. V. Kayode, S. O. Oninla, J. A. O. Okeniyi, G. Oyedeji, A. O. Odeyemi, O. A. Abayomi	
<b>Sex Hormone-Binding Globulin Level Enhances Prediction of Gestational Diabetes Mellitus in a Sub-Saharan African Population .....</b>	<b>580</b>
B. Basil, I. N. Mba, S. A. Adebisi, B. K. Myke-Mbata, E. K. Oghagbon	
<b>Associated Psychological Factors of Viral Load among Self-Isolating Nigerian COVID-19 Patients .....</b>	<b>588</b>
T. Opakunle, O. Aloba, O. Opakunle, P. Olaitan, O. Adebimpe, O. Adeagbo	
<b>Cervical Cancer Knowledge, Risk Factors and Screening Practices among Women Residing in Urban Slums of Lagos, Southwest, Nigeria .....</b>	<b>595</b>
T. Olubodun, M. R. Balogun, O. I. Olowoselu, V. A. Emina, U. U. Ugwuowo, O. O. Ogundele, M. Kerry, T. O. Charles-Eronmosele, A. B. Olubodun	
<b>Cord Blood Thyroid Stimulating Hormone Values in Healthy Term Babies delivered at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital Bauchi, Northeastern Nigeria .....</b>	<b>603</b>
M. F. Bashir, H. A. Elechi, O. O. Jarrett, E. E. Oyenusi, A. Oduwole, N. Ibrahim, I. Ohuche, I. A. Adedeji, S. Adamu, J. Jingina, A. S. Adamu, L. M. Dattijo, Y. A. Misau	
<b>The Prevalence and Outcome of Teenage Pregnancies in a Secondary Health Facility in Delta State, Nigeria: A Four-Year Retrospective Review .....</b>	<b>609</b>
N. S. Awunor, D. T. Obong, A. A. Nwachi, A. On-Emore, O. A. Oloya, K. O. Omoyibo, U. Onyejekwe	
<b>Translation, Cultural Adaptation and Validation of the Hausa version of the Standardised Mini-Mental State Examination in Northeastern Nigeria .....</b>	<b>614</b>
T. Adeniji, A. Y. Oyeyemi	
<b>Malignant Melanoma in Lagos, Nigeria: Elucidating Histopathologic Prognostic Factors .....</b>	<b>623</b>
O. O. Obadofin, K. B. Badmos, O. O. Omoseebi, A. A. F. Banjo	
<b>Neurogenic Tumors of the Oral and Maxillofacial Region in a Nigerian Population .....</b>	<b>628</b>
R. Agbara, B. Fomete, K. U. Omeje	
<b>Epidemiology and Management of Oculoplastic Disorders at a Tertiary Hospital: A 4-Year Review .....</b>	<b>635</b>
B. A. Adewara, S. A. Badmus, O. O. Awe, O. H. Onakpoya, B. O. Adegbehingbe, A. O. Adeoye	
<b>Experiences of Multidisciplinary Working: Perspectives from the Wessex Ghana Stroke Partnership .....</b>	<b>641</b>
A. Akpalu, L. Sykes, K. Nkromah, J. Attah, C. Osei-Yeboah, L. Johnson, C. Amponsah, F. Laryea, O. Anarfi, A. Shaw, L. Cullen, S. Easton, C. Fullbrook-Scanlon, C. Gordon, C. Spice	
<b>CASE REPORT</b>	
<b>Disseminated Tuberculosis in a Nigerian Adolescent with Linear IgA Bullous Dermatitis: A Case Report and Review of Literature .....</b>	<b>646</b>
A. A. Gobir, S. O. Ariyibi, R. M. Ibraheem, A. R. Johnson, M.B. Abdulkadir, O. S. Katibi, P.O. Adeoye, E.A. Udoh, O.N. Ilesanmi, O. O. Folaranmi	
<b>INDEX TO VOLUME 39, NO. 6, 2022</b>	
<b>Author Index .....</b>	<b>651</b>
<b>Subject Index .....</b>	<b>652</b>



### Associated Psychological Factors of Viral Load among Self-Isolating Nigerian COVID-19 Patients

*Facteurs Psychologiques Associés à la Charge Virale chez les Patients Nigériens Auto-Isolants du COVID-19*

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#### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a pandemic that has affected millions of people worldwide. The aim of this study was to explore the psychological factors of viral load among COVID-19 patients who were on self-isolation in Nigeria.

**METHODS:** This is a cross-sectional study involving five hundred and nine self-isolating COVID-19 patients in Osogbo, Nigeria. They completed a socio-demographic questionnaire, Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) questionnaire, Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), Insomnia Severity Index (ISI-7) and Brief Self Rating Scale (BSRS-5). The viral load was inferred from the Cycle threshold (Ct) value.

**RESULTS:** The prevalence of anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, insomnia, and suicidal ideation were 40%, 35.6%, 23%, and 7.3%, respectively. The respondents who had high viral load had significantly higher mean scores compared to those with a low viral load on the anxiety, depression, insomnia, psychological symptoms scales, and suicidal ideation item. There was significant negative correlation between Ct values and the study measures. Only psychological distress and suicidal ideation were the variables that were significantly associated with high viral load.

**CONCLUSION:** There is a need to institute measures for mental health surveillance and psychosocial support among Nigerian COVID-19 patients especially during the period of self-isolation.

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**Keywords:** Psychological correlates, viral load, COVID-19, Corona virus, SARS-CoV-2.

#### RÉSUMÉ

**CONTEXTE:** La maladie du virus de la Corona 2019 (COVID-19) est une pandémie qui a touché des millions de personnes dans le monde. Le but de cette étude était d'explorer les facteurs psychologiques de la charge virale chez les patients COVID-19 en auto-isolement au Nigeria.

**MÉTHODES:** Il s'agit d'une étude transversale impliquant cinq cent neuf patients COVID-19 en auto-isolement au à Osogbo, Nigeria. Ils ont complété un questionnaire socio-démographique sur le trouble anxieux généralisé (GAD-7), le questionnaire sur la santé du patient (PHQ-9), l'indice de gravité de l'insomnie (ISI-7) et l'échelle d'auto-évaluation brève (BSRS-5). La charge virale a été déduite de la valeur du seuil de cycle (Ct).

**RÉSULTATS:** La prévalence des symptômes d'anxiété, des symptômes dépressifs, de l'insomnie et du suicide et des idées suicidaires était de 40 %, 35,6 %, 23 % et 7,3 %, respectivement. Les répondants ayant une charge virale élevée avaient des scores moyens significativement plus élevés que ceux qui avaient une faible charge virale sur les échelles d'anxiété, de dépression, d'insomnie, les échelles de symptômes psychologiques et l'item d'idéation suicidaire. Il y avait une corrélation négative significative entre les valeurs de Ct et les mesures de l'étude. Seules la détresse psychologique et l'idéation suicidaire étaient les variables significativement associées à une charge virale élevée.

**CONCLUSION:** Il est nécessaire d'instituer des mesures de surveillance de la santé mentale et de soutien psychosocial parmi les patients de COVID-19 au Nigeria en particulier pendant la période d'auto-isolement. **WAJM 2022; 39(6): 588–594.**

**Mots clés:** Corrélats psychologiques, charge virale, COVID-19, virus Corona, SRAS-CoV-2.

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**Abbreviations:** BSRS-5, Brief Self Rating Scale; COVID-19, Corona Virus Disease 2019; CT, Cycle Threshold; GAD-7, Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire; ISI-7, Insomnia Severity Index; PHQ-9, Patient Health Questionnaire; RT-PCR, Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction.