



MORE THAN SMELL: COVID-19 IS ASSOCIATED WITH SEVERE IMPAIRMENT OF SMELL, TASTE, AND CHEMESTHESIS

Many patients with COVID-19 experience a loss of smell (anosmia) and/or taste (ageusia). Over 500 researchers from 56 different countries have joined forces to study this phenomenon in the Global Consortium for Chemosensory Research (GCCR; <https://gcchemosensr.org>). More than 35 French researchers including several CSGA researchers are members of the GCCR. The consortium rolled out a questionnaire in March which was translated into 32 languages and dialects (<https://gcchemosensr.org/surveys/>). The questionnaire was aimed at patients with ongoing or cured COVID-19 as well as all patients suffering from respiratory diseases which may impair their sense of smell and/or taste. By mid-July, the questionnaire had nearly 39,400 responses.

The researchers' aim is to evaluate the frequency and the characteristics of ageusia and anosmia among people positive to COVID-19, to compare with smell and taste losses due to other viral or respiratory illnesses and to initiate monitoring in the medium and long terms. A first article co-authored by around a hundred scientists from the Consortium was published in Chemical Senses. The results from 4,000 patients, mainly European respondents were analysed and show that the sense of smell is reduced by almost 80% on average in patients with COVID-19, but without nasal obstruction that is very common in other ENT viral infection. This article also shows that the other chemical senses are affected but to a lesser extent. An approximate 70% decrease in the ability to distinguish taste sensations (sweet, salty, acid, bitter and umami) was found while trigeminal sensations (tingling or burning sensations for example) were found to decrease by almost 40%.



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To know more

Parma, V. et al. (2020). More than smell – COVID-19 is associated with severe impairment of smell, taste, and chemesthesia. medRxiv 10.1101/2020.05.04.20090902 ; Chemical Senses 10.1093/chemse/bjaa041

Key-words

COVID-19; olfaction; gustation; trigeminal sensations; ageusia; anosmia; GCCR