

# Review of adherence to the acute respiratory infection (ARI) case definition in a primary care vaccine effectiveness study in Portugal

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# BACKGROUND

- To expand surveillance to include non-influenza respiratory viruses, many European countries adapted their approach after the COVID-19 pandemic
- Transitioning from **solely using the influenza-like illness (ILI)** case definition to **incorporating both ILI and acute respiratory infection (ARI) definitions**, or **ARI case definition** alone

## Aim

The aim of this study was to assess adherence to the application of the ARI case definition by sentinel general practitioners (GPs) in Portugal integrated in a primary care vaccine effectiveness (VE) study (VEBIS Primary Care)

# METHODS

Anonymous online questionnaire

Sentinel GP (and Emergency Departments focal points) for influenza surveillance

n = 119

4 email invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent

(16.04 to 09.05.2024)

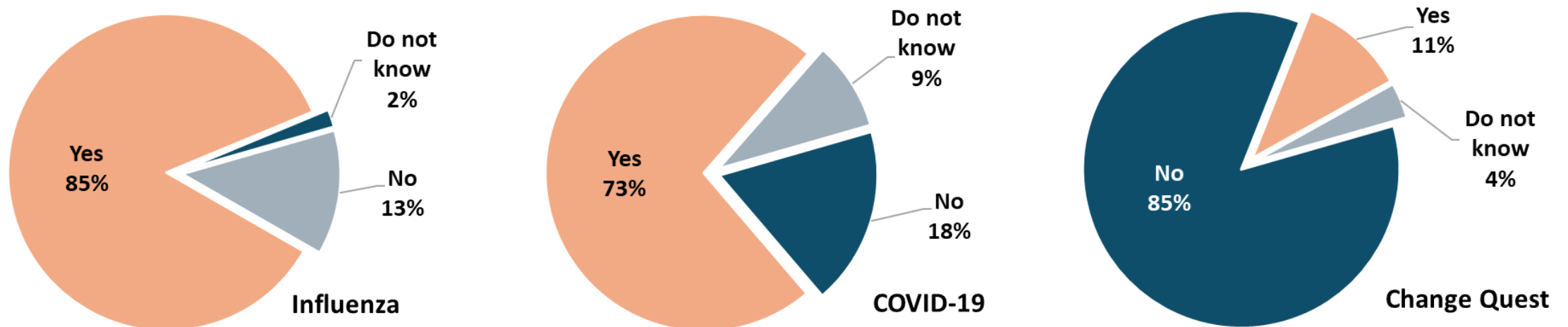
70 responses

15 excluded  
(incomplete)  
(21,4%)

55 included  
(78,6%)  
Participation rate  
46,2% (55/119)

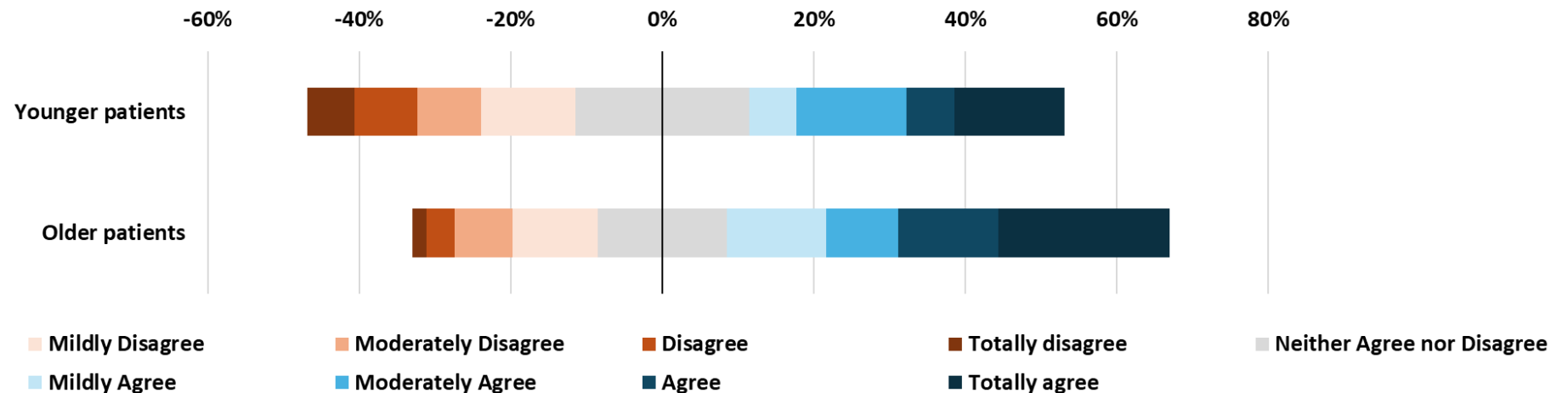
# GPs indicated that ARI case definition...

- identifies influenza (85%) and COVID-19 patients (73%)
- no change is needed in the surveillance questionnaire (85%)
  - 11% indicated that diarrhea, vomiting, wheezing, and fever duration should be considered in case definition



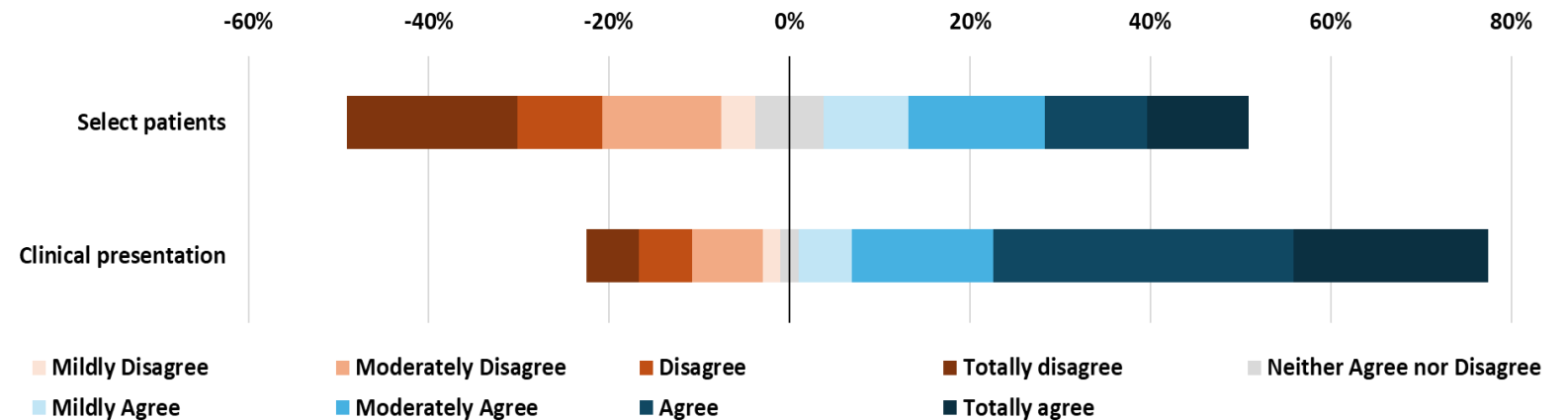
# GPs indicated that ARI case definition...

- works for the selection of **older patients** (56%)
  - no clear pattern** if ARI case definition was appropriate for selecting **young children** (36% agreeing vs. 31% disagreeing)
  - 27% indicated** that ARI case definition **did not captured well** immunocompromised, patients with COPD and cardiac diseases, children and elderly



## Also from the GPs responses...

- **45% select patients they highly suspect** of having influenza/COVID-19, even if they do **not meet the case definition**
- **71% more likely to select** patients with a **more severe clinical presentation**
- **75% reported not using any additional criterion** for patient selection during weeks of **high workload**
  - ▶ **22% reported** that **older** and **more symptomatic** patients were **chosen preferentially** during these periods



# CONCLUSION

The results indicate Portuguese sentinel GPs consider the proposed **ARI case definition suitable** to identify **patients with influenza** and **COVID-19**, thus not suggesting changes to the case definition

However:

- **27% reported** the case definition does not adequately capture **children, elderly and patients with chronic conditions**
- **11% indicated** the inclusion **of other signs and symptoms**

This work added information for an ongoing discussion about the need for possible changes to the ARI case definition

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**Obrigado! Gracias! Thank you!**