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The Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Sanitation Practices and Anxiety in the General Population

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The Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Sanitation Practices and Anxiety in the General Population

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Background

- Anxiety surrounding illness and contracting coronavirus increased considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Media coverage, lockdown, and cyberchondria had the largest impact on the population's anxiety around illness
- Studies showed anxiety was significantly heightened in students who lived alone
- Patients with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Illness anxiety disorder had worsened anxiety around illness post-pandemic
- There is limited research on the long-term effects of COVID-19 on sanitation practices and anxiety in the general population
- Hypothesis:** sanitation practices and anxiety surrounding illness have not returned to their baseline pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels

Significance

- If the same anxiety and sanitation practices persist post-COVID-19 pandemic, the findings can help healthcare professionals be aware and have better conversations with patients to improve patient care

Methods

- A 26-question survey was designed using Qualtrics
- The questions included demographic information and sanitation practices & illness anxiety levels pre- and post-pandemic
- Survey was distributed to patients in-person at Rowan-Virtua Family Medicine offices
- 55 responses were recorded, and the data was analyzed using Chi-squared and paired t-test on SPSS

Results

Hand Sanitizing and Masking During and Post-pandemic

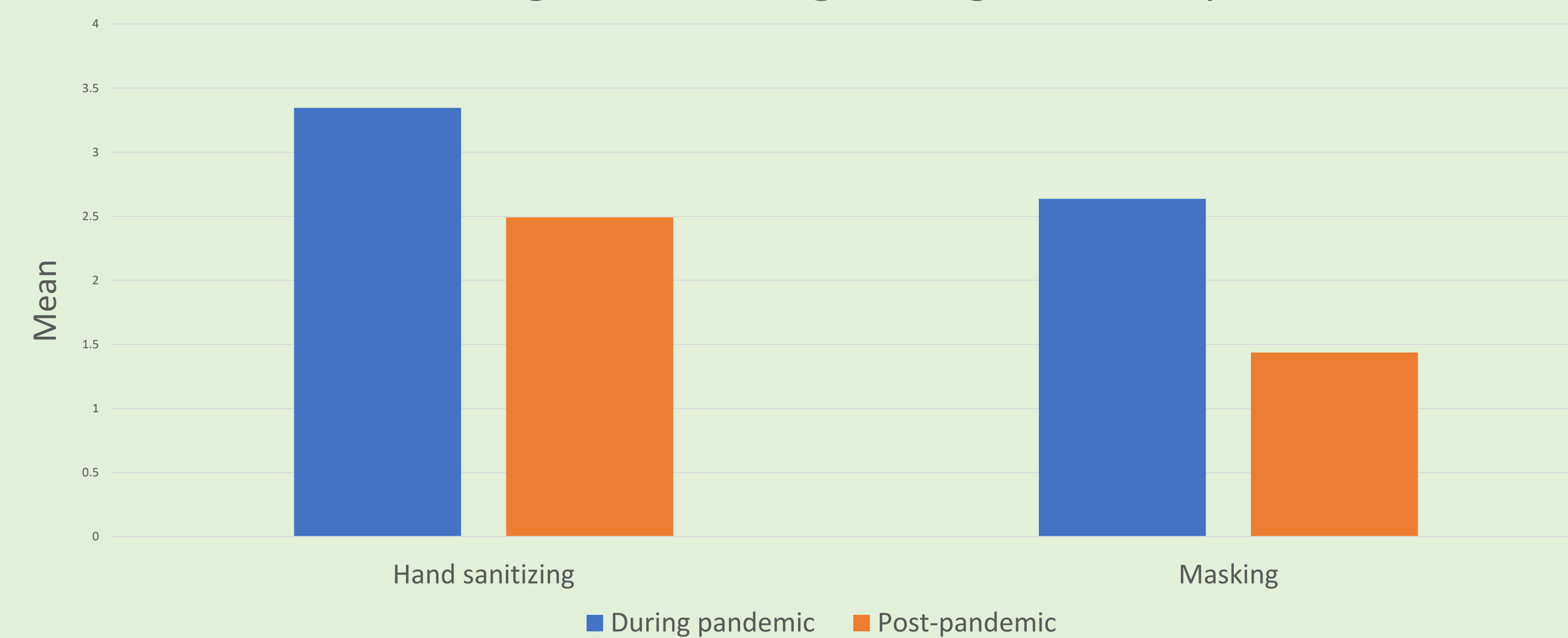


Figure 1. Bar graph showing means for hand sanitizing and masking during and post-pandemic

Concern for Contracting COVID-19

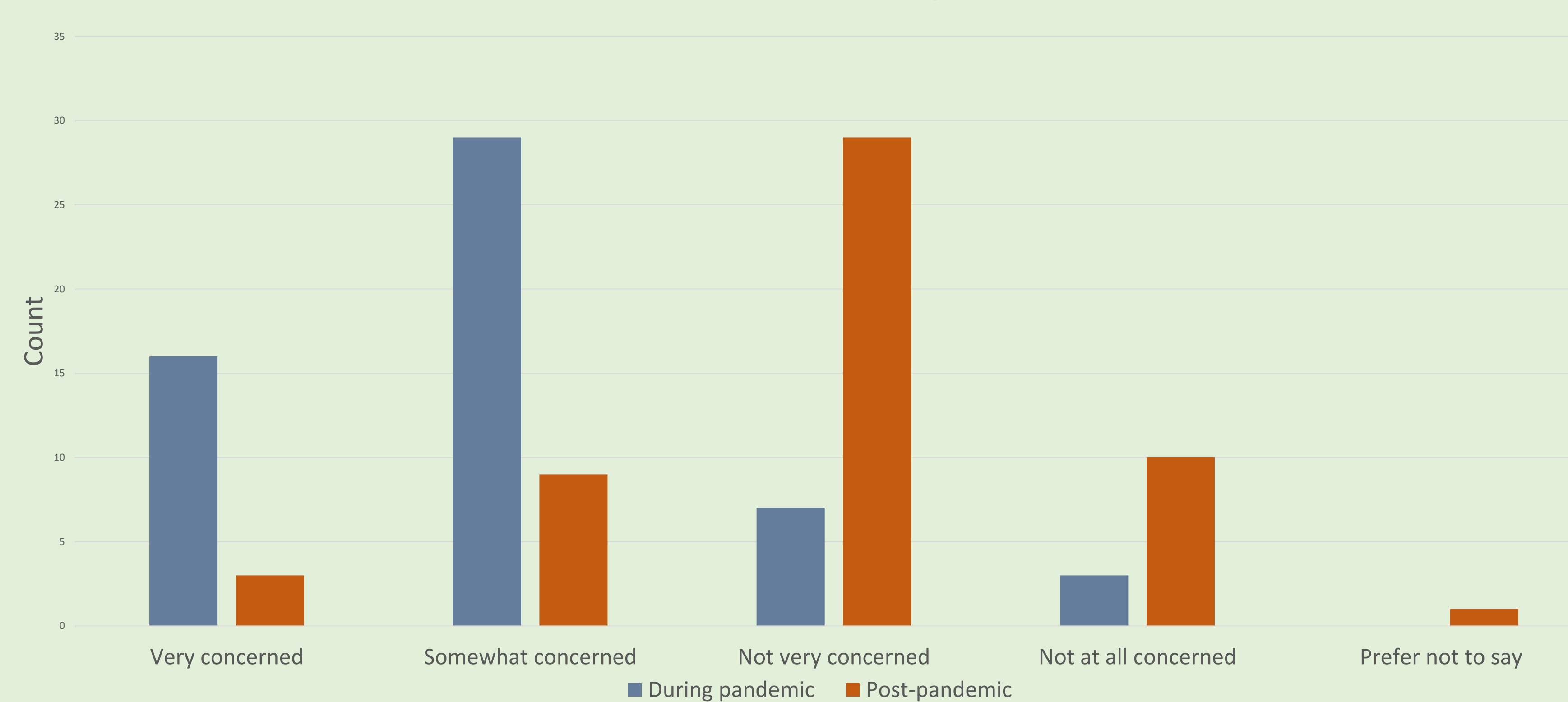


Figure 2. Bar graph showing participants' concern for contracting COVID-19 pre- and post-pandemic

- Paired t-test for masking and sanitizing pre- and post-pandemic showed significant results (**p= 0.001**)
 - Significant decrease in masking and sanitizing post-pandemic
- Statistically significant paired t-test for participants' concern of contracting COVID-19 pre- and post-pandemic (**p= 0.001**)
- Statistically significant difference between gender for making an appointment with a physician if they develop a new symptom (ex. Cough, sore throat, etc.) (**p= 0.026**)
- 87% of participants are vaccinated for COVID-19
- 71% of participants received at least one dose of COVID-19 booster
- No statistically significant difference between ethnicity and illness anxiety post-pandemic

Discussion

- Sanitation practices and illness anxiety returned to pre-pandemic baseline
- Majority of the participants are vaccinated for COVID-19
- Correlation between identifying as female and scheduling appointment to see a physician if develop new symptom such as cough, fever, etc.
- Survey was distributed during summer months when illness is not as common as winter

- Limitations:** small sample size , low response rate

- Future direction:** repeat survey with a larger sample size

References

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