The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was successfully contained in Greece with a low infection attack rate. Strict lockdown measures were implemented from March to May 2020 (Fig. 1). ID physicians were amongst the frontline healthcare workers in Greece and similar experience has been recorded in other recent international publications trying to quantify the impact of COVID-19 on HIV services and care (Kowalska et al. 2020). The purpose of this survey was to assess the operational effect of COVID-19 on HIV clinics in Greece during the first 3 months of the pandemic.

Information was gathered in June 2020, after the lockdown lift, via an anonymous electronic questionnaire of 20 questions distributed to an expert panel of HIV/ID physicians (n=9). Questions included HIV clinic operational metrics (e.g. appointments, new cases, patient monitoring) and HCPS perceptions for the impact on patients and the clinics.

Of the 9 panelists, 80% worked in a COVID-19 reference hospital, 90% had direct involvement in COVID-19 patient care, devoting an average of 90% of their working time on COVID-19. During lockdown all clinics had to cancel scheduled visits (25% completely, 50% covering only emergencies and prescriptions). All centers stopped routine checks for cardiovascular and other comorbidities and 75% also stopped routine laboratory testing as well as mental health services.

Overall there was an 82% drop in routine appointments during lockdown compared to Jan-Feb. Significantly fewer PEP cases were recorded, and there was an approximate 50% drop in new HIV cases presenting to the clinics (34% were late presenters) compared to the monthly average of Jan-Feb.

Conclusions: This short survey demonstrates that in Greece, in the context of a successful early containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a major disruption in HIV services, mainly due to the low number of HIV/ID physicians having to cover multiple roles (including HIV care) and the healthcare system’s insufficient capacity to deal with routine care under pressure.