

RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND NOVEL TECHNOLOGIES ADVISORY GROUP 27TH OCTOBER 2020

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ODT RESEARCH – OCTOBER 2020 UPDATE

The COVID-19 pandemic began to have an impact on ODT Research in early March 2020. Revised donor selection criteria affected the number of organs available for transplantation, and consequently research. Almost all studies shut down whilst universities were closed during the initial wave in the spring, and researchers instructed to focus on COVID-related research.

We have seen recovery as restrictions were relaxed over the summer (Fig.1) with the number of research offers returning to pre-COVID levels, matching the recovery of donation and transplantation.

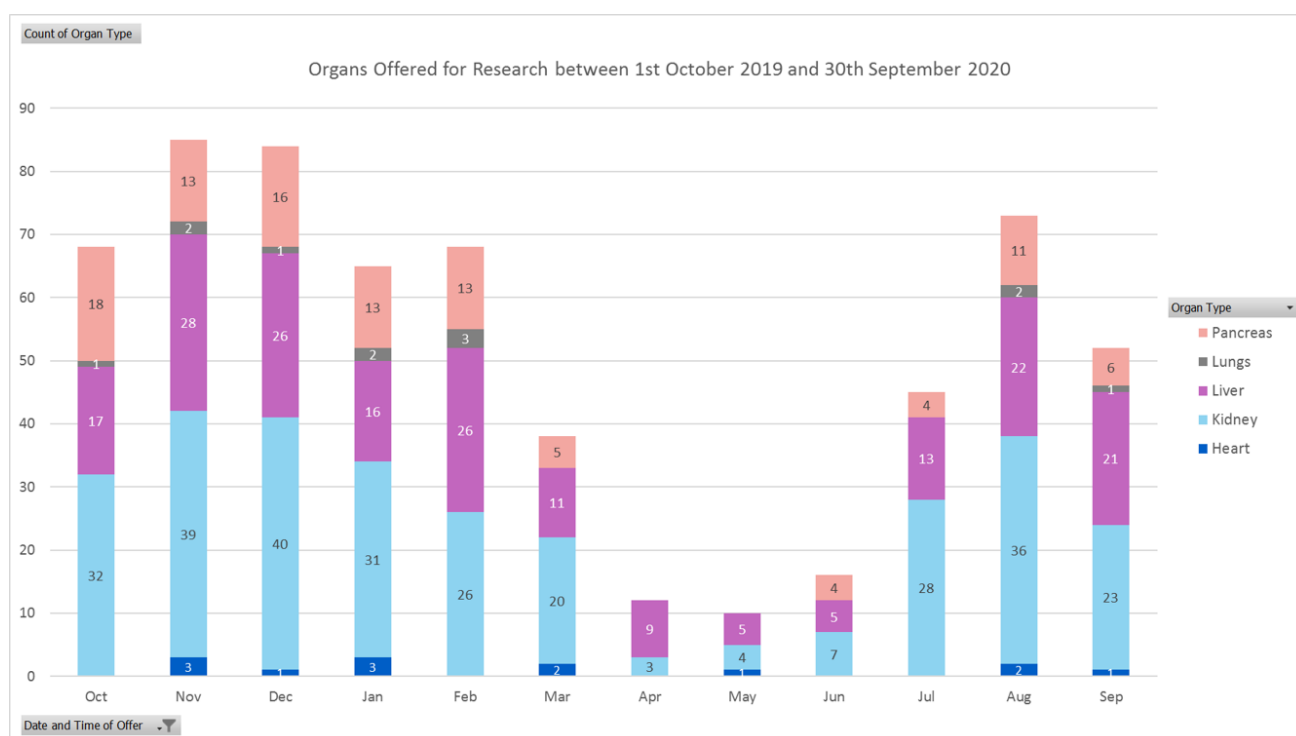


Figure 1: The number of organs offered for research through the National Allocation Scheme (generic consent or authorisation) between 1st October 2019 and 30th September 2020.

At present all studies receiving organs through generic consent/authorisation and the National Allocation Scheme (NAS) have reopened. Only a small number of service evaluations or specific consent/authorisation studies are yet to reopen, for various reasons. These projects are reviewed weekly at the Transplant Development & Research recovery programme board and are:

- Study 58: ENLIGHTEN lung project (the generic part is open; specific is closed)
- Study 75: the PITHIA clinical trial
- Study 76: Ex-Situ Normothermic Machine Perfusion
- Study 80: Uterine transplantation

We have heard anecdotally from studies that whilst they have reopened, social distancing measures in their labs mean that their time to carry out experiments is more limited. That being said, acceptance rates remain similar to before the pandemic (Fig. 2).

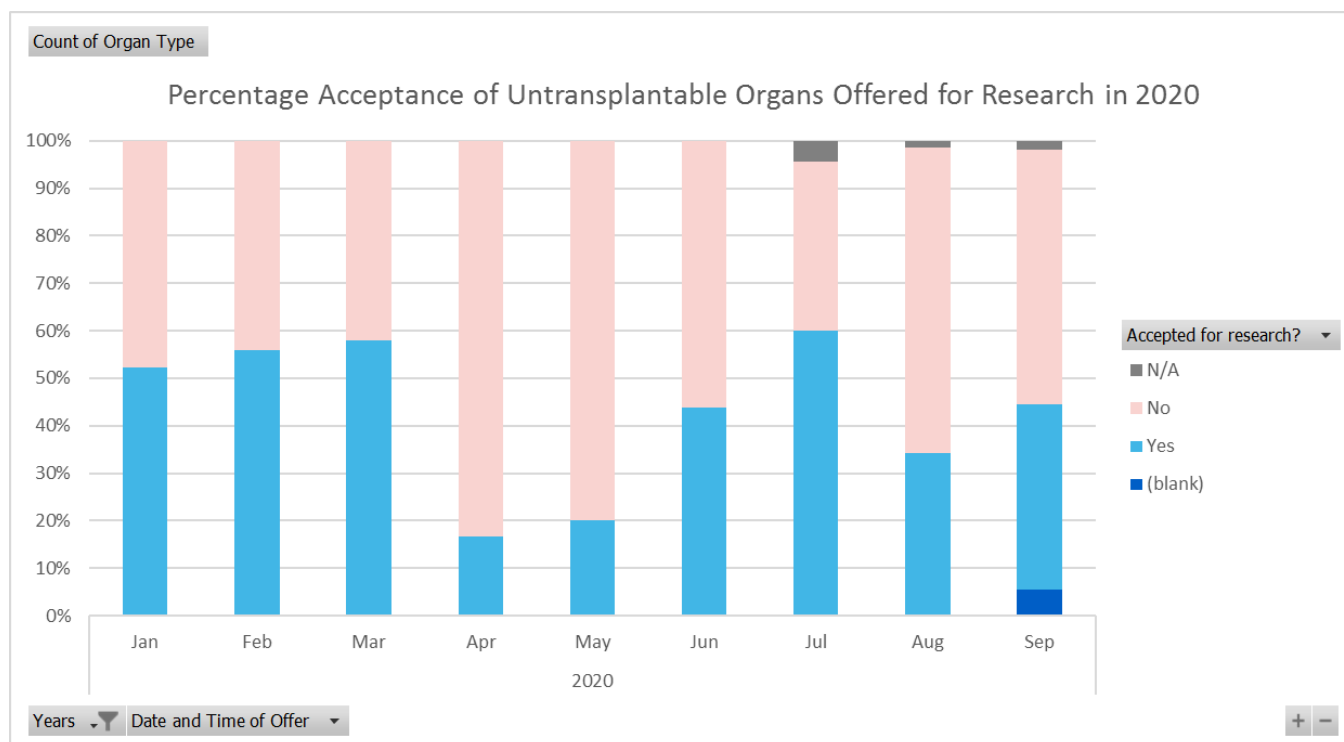


Figure 2: Percentage Acceptance of the Organs Offered for Research between January and October 2020.

A full national lockdown for a second wave seems unlikely; if we reach the stage of university closures again we are more likely to see study suspension on a city or regional basis and therefore some research should continue. In the last week NIHR have issued guidance to state that both COVID and non-COVID related research should be protected in the event of a second wave¹.

As a research team we have not had any requests from researchers for COVID-19-related work as yet, but are aware of QUOD's work on the COVID-19 Bioarchive and requests to them for samples through our fortnightly meetings with the QUOD management team.

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19th October 2020

¹ <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/nihr-guidance-for-a-second-wave-of-covid-19-activity/25837>