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A Review of Enquiries Received by a National COVID-19 Travel Health Advice Service

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Background

To review the types of queries received by a dedicated national travel health COVID-19 enquiries service, and evaluate the challenges faced by travellers related to the evolution of country requirements during COVID-19 pandemic.

Materials and Methods

Data from a COVID-19 email enquiry service for travellers was captured using an electronic data collection form (Formic Solutions) between March 2020 to February 2022 and analysed using MS Excel. Enquiry type, advice provided and how this changed over time was considered.

Results

A total of 493 enquiries were analysed; July 2021 (13%) and September 2021 (12%) were the months with the most enquiries. 302 (61%) related to outbound travel; 159 (32%) inbound travel whilst 32 (7%) were unknown. Focusing on outbound travel, Europe accounted for 182 (60%) with France 27 (15%) and Spain 39 (21%) being the most queried countries. Of the 182, 63 (35%) queries were testing and vaccination related, 67 (37%) for entry requirements and 13 (7%) related to quarantine requirements on return.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first evaluation of such queries which highlighted that travellers needed to access a COVID information service. High enquiry months aligned with easing of 2021 UK lockdown measures and queries focussed on country entry/exit requirements rather than risk. Although the unadvertised nature of the service means that our findings may not be representative of all challenges faced by travellers, it provides a unique opportunity for health promotion to support travellers and can be reproduced by other national travel health services.