

A comparison of enquiries to a national telephone advice line by health professionals, between 2016 and 2019 relating to cruise ship travel.

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Background

According to the Cruise Lines International Association, 30 million cruise passengers were expected globally in 2019, reflecting a 17.6 percent increase from 2016 (24.7 million). This study compared types of queries, relating to cruise ship travel, to a national telephone advice line for health professionals during 2016 and 2019.

Method

A retrospective analysis of call data (including destinations of travel, demographics of the traveller, pre-existing medical conditions, and yellow fever queries), collected during 2016 and 2019, was undertaken using MS Excel.

Results

During 2016 the total number of queries (all types of call) to the national advice line for health professionals was 6238, compared to 5104 during 2019. Cruise ship travel related queries numbered 452 (7.2%) during 2016, compared to 221 (4.3%) during 2019. Most queries related to travellers over 60; 71.4% in 2016 and 80.5% in 2019. In 2016 31.6 % queries related to travellers with pre-existing medical conditions, compared to 49.7% in 2019. Yellow fever queries predominated (76.1% of queries in 2016 and 99% in 2019), with most relating to travellers over 60 years of age; 85.7% in 2016 and 81.4% in 2019.

Conclusions

The number of queries about cruise ship travel accounts for a small proportion of queries to the advice line but the preponderance of queries relating to travellers over the age of 60 years, yellow fever and travellers with pre-existing medical conditions, reflect the challenges faced by frontline health professionals advising travellers. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to become apparent.