

ESP Position Statement “COVID-19”

In response to some of the claims made by the article “No one has died from the coronavirus,” the European Society of Pathology (ESP) offers the following comments:

- **Claim by the article:**

“No one has died from the coronavirus”

- **Comment by the ESP:**

As discussed in the two ESP webinars on the subject (May 8th and June 25th, 2020), the striking autopsy findings seen in the lungs and other organs of COVID-19 patients are unexplainable as the effect of any concurrent disease and support the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) as the cause of death in these cases.

In agreement with this, autopsy studies of COVID-19 patients have demonstrated the presence of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in a variety of tissues, mainly the lungs and the inner lining of blood vessels (endothelium). There is evidence of a specific COVID-19-associated coagulopathy that can cause deadly thromboembolism.

- **Claim by the article:**

“In the absence of monoclonal antibodies to the novel coronavirus, pathologists cannot verify whether SARS-CoV-2 is present in the body, or whether the diseases and deaths attributed to it indeed were caused by the virus rather than by something else”

- **Comment by the ESP:**

Monoclonal antibodies able to identify different components of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) are certainly available. They are used by pathologists to demonstrate the presence of the virus in body tissues with immunohistochemistry and immunofluorescence studies.

Other techniques (such as in situ hybridization and RT-PCR) can detect viral RNA in tissues. Additionally, electron microscopy neatly allows the visualization of the spike-crowned virus (hence the name coronavirus) in the diseased organs.

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Coronavirus images as observed by pathologists in human tissues may be seen in the articles by M. Ackerman et al (NEJM 2020), I. Colmenero et al (Brit J Dermatol 2020), V.G. Puelles et al (NEJM 2020) and Z.Varga et al (Lancet 2020), among others.

The above comments briefly summarize the official position of the European Society of Pathology (ESP), which is not responsible for the claims and opinions of its individual members.

Sincerely yours,

Prof Holger Moch, ESP President
Dr Raed Al Dieri, ESP Director-General
Prof Aurelio Ariza, ESP Secretary”



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