



Long COVID

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges briefing statement

Prepared by Dr Cian Wade, Academy Clinical Fellow

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NHS England/NHS Improvement recognise the implications of “Long COVID” and are preparing a programme which includes:

- Provision of guidance for clinicians to support understanding of the condition
- Provision of specific NHS services to address the condition
- Rehabilitation services
- Gathering data and supporting research
- Communications to the public and clinicians.

Though currently awaiting a formal case definition and guidance from NICE, this describes the constellation of symptoms that a small but significant minority of patients suffer from for a potentially prolonged period of time after their recovery from the acute infection. These symptoms include, but are not limited to, persistent breathlessness, profound fatigue and “brain fog”.

Sir Simon Stevens recently announced that NHSE/I would invest £10 million in developing long COVID clinics across England in order to support these patients. This complements existing work in conjunction with University Hospitals of Leicester in creating a [Your COVID Recovery](#) platform on their website in order to provide support for individuals with long COVID. NHSE/I have provided support to NIHR funded studies working with 10,000 patients in order to better understand the condition and optimal approaches to its management. They have also established a “long COVID taskforce”, which includes patients, clinicians and researchers in order oversee further developments in our approach to long COVID.

We are at an extremely early stage of our understanding of long COVID from an epidemiological, pathophysiological and therapeutic perspective. However, a wide cross-section of patients will likely be impacted and therefore it will be relevant to a number of different specialties and care settings.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (the Academy) has sought input from their members on the emerging picture of “long COVID”.

Certain Academy members have already commenced work relating to long COVID:

- The Royal College of General Practitioners are working with NICE and SIGN to produce a single national multi-professional guideline on long COVID by the end of the year. They have also produced two e-learning modules in order to educate patients on some of the features of long COVID. The College are preparing a submission to the House of Lords Select Committee regarding the long-term effects of COVID and its impact upon primary care. They are also keen to collaborate with other groups to generate appropriate SNOMED codes in order to facilitate digital coding of the diagnosis within patient notes. They are also producing guidance for their members



- The Royal College of Psychiatrists are supporters of the CoroNerve study, which is assessing the broader neuropsychiatric implications of COVID-19, within which long COVID will be captured
- The Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine have developed resources linked to their Moving Medicine initiative specifically for patients recovering from COVID-19. The Faculty are also collaborating with various groups in order to create an exercise programme targeted at those suffering from long COVID. This will require further ongoing funding and the Faculty therefore welcomes wider collaboration on this initiative
- The Faculty of Occupational Medicine are preparing guidance on helping patients suffering from long COVID to return to work. The Faculty welcomes improvements in the understanding of the long-term functional prognosis of long COVID, in order to better advise employers regarding return to work plans.

Although the vast majority of patients with long COVID will be managed in the community setting, many specialties will have contact with these patients in other care settings. An awareness of any implications of long COVID for the management of other comorbidities will be important for all clinicians. It is therefore important that all clinicians and specialties remain vigilant to the research findings that emerge from the scientific community in relation to long COVID. This is reflected in a large number of our other Academy members expressing a desire to be engaged in future discussions and collaborations.

The Academy is keen to continue engagement with members and other stakeholders as the picture around long COVID develops and we would be happy to facilitate future meetings and discussions between NHSE/I and Colleges.