Post Covid-19 Clinical Considerations

What We Know

Some patients with COVID-19, ranging from mild to critical symptoms, experience persistence of COVID-19 clinical presentation for weeks to months after symptoms first arise. This emerging condition has been described using a variety of terms, including: "Post-Covid-19 Syndrome", "Long COVID", "Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-COV2 infection (PASC)", and "Long-Haulers".

Current evidence regarding treatment for this condition is evolving as research continues. As healthcare professionals, we must keep informed to ensure the provision of evidence-based care.

Statistics of Post-COVID-19 Syndrome

According to Harvard Health Blog, recent studies indicate that 50-80% of patients continue to have at least one adverse symptom three months after the onset of COVID-19, even if the patient no longer tests positive for the virus. Though what predisposes an individual to developing "Long COVID" is still unknown, some with even mild symptoms have continued to experience lingering symptoms.

Symptoms

Musculoskeletal/Physical

- Fatigue
- Post exertion malaise (PEM)
- Weight loss
- Painful joints/muscles
- Changes to vision

Cardiopulmonary

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Limited activity tolerance
- Postural hypotension
- Rapid oxygen desaturation
- Dysfunctional breathing patterns
- Cardiac issues (arrhythmias)

Oral/Respiratory

- Post-intubation dysphagia
- Speech difficulties

Neurological

- Reduced wakefulness
- Confusion/delirium
- Attention deficits/poor concentration
- Executive dysfunction
- Impulsivity/disinhibition
- Reduced working memory
- Neuropathy

Psychological

- Fear
- Loss of control/self-efficacy
- Anxiety/panic attacks
- Depression
- PTSD
- Grief

Action

As with active cases of COVID-19, physical, occupational, and speech therapy practitioners can intervene to assist patients with "long hauler" symptoms in returning to daily function with use of:

- Individualized, cardiopulmonary programming
- Patient-specific intervention to observed musculoskeletal and neurological dysfunction
- Compensatory strategies to assist with cognitive re-training
- Dysphagia treatment
- Environmental modifications to facilitate increased participation and decrease risk of injury
- An interdisciplinary approach to addressing psychological effects of prolonged isolation
- Caregiver and staff education and training on use of adaptive strategies and equipment

Ensure interdisciplinary communication if a change in condition is noted.

Some individuals recovering from COVID-19 may develop other conditions or complications of pre-existing conditions as a result of the illness. Though the correlation between COVID-19 and these conditions is still unclear, clinicians should refer to nursing and/or the physician when changes in clinical presentation are observed and follow evidence-based guidance to treatment.

Contact clinicalteam@reliant-rehab.com for more information.

Reliant REHABILITATION