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## Covid-19: Long covid must be recognised as occupational disease, says BMA

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The UK government must recognise long covid as an occupational disease and invest in its monitoring, research, and treatment, doctors have said.

In a motion passed at the BMA annual representative meeting, doctors called on the body to “seek the recognition of occupationally acquired acute covid and long covid in doctors as an occupational disease.” They also called for a multidisciplinary approach to the management of long covid that includes primary, specialist, and occupational medicine.

GP Amy Small, who proposed the motion, told the conference her story of catching covid-19 at work, developing long covid, and ultimately being forced out of her practice because of illness.

She said, “I, like many others, caught covid at work and then passed it on to my husband and two children. My children thankfully recovered quickly, my husband and I did not. We developed long covid, crippled with breathlessness, fatigue, myalgia, brain fog, and many other symptoms. Six months into my illness I lost my job, unable to fulfil my partnership duties. My partner, terrified I would be a disabled doctor, expelled me from the practice.

“I am not the only GP to lose my job. And I’m aware of colleagues more than 12 months down the line being forced to medically retire because they have no other option. We caught covid at work, during a pandemic, wearing the only protection offered to us—which we know is inadequate against this airborne virus.”

Small called for the UK to follow the lead of the governments of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, and Spain which have recognised covid-19 as an occupational illness and compensated healthcare workers.

Supporting the motion, GP and BMA council chair Chaand Nagpaul added, “The government has airbrushed long covid. All ministers talk about is hospital admissions and deaths. In doing so they’re ignoring the illness burden. They aren’t taking long covid seriously.”

The only opposition to the motion was regarding the wording around doctors, rather than all healthcare workers. It was accepted, however, that the BMA should work to support the unions of other healthcare professionals to ensure that all health and social care staff are included.