LONG COVID UPDATE FOR PRIMARY CARE

Long covid update for primary care should acknowledge functional symptoms

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It must be a fraught task, writing about long covid. The list of symptoms is huge and we don’t really know how it arises. I often feel inadequate faced with patients distressed by their long covid symptoms.

I was bothered by the lack of any mention by Greenhalgh and colleagues of a functional element to long covid. 1 It seemed a huge omission to me. Many of the complaints we see in primary care are of a functional nature and there is often a large functional component to physical illnesses like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, heart disease, and musculoskeletal pains. How can we start to help people who suffer functional symptoms if there is a taboo about mentioning it?

People with functional symptoms are suffering in the same way as those with physical symptoms and if we are to destigmatise this area of medicine then authors as important and respected as Greenhalgh and colleagues should acknowledge their existence. It would be extraordinary if many people suffering long covid did not have a functional element to their presentations. Concentrating on physical tests and bodily mechanisms wholly risks missing this component.

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