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Post COVID-19 Condition: Understanding Implications for OT Practice

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Learning Objectives

- Define and describe Post COVID-19 Condition (PCC)
- Apply recommended treatment interventions for individuals with PCC
- Understand models of care for individuals with PCC

Introduction

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on morbidity, mortality, and occupational performance for individuals worldwide ¹
- However, much less is known about the sequela of the disease process, with 80% of those with confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis continuing to report at least one symptom beyond two weeks ²

Post COVID-19 Condition (PCC)

- Post COVID-19 Condition (PCC) also known as "Long COVID" is defined as the illness that occurs in people who have a history of probable or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection, usually within three months from the onset of COVID-19, with symptoms and effects that last for at least two months ³
- Clinical presentation of PCC can be characterized as three possible stages, including "multi-dimensional", "fluctuating", or "episodic" and generally has an impact on everyday functioning ⁴
- Upwards of 150+ symptoms have been identified in the literature for individuals suffering from PCC, although severity, number, and duration may vary or relapse over time ¹

World Health Organization (WHO) Living Guidelines

- Chapter 24: Rehabilitation of adults with post COVID-19 condition ⁵
 - Published Sept 2022; Targeted for Clinicians & Program Planners
- Up to date guidelines for the rehabilitation and clinical management of adults with PCC
- As PCC can have a multi-system impact, many topics may be interconnected and/or linked to support the rehabilitation process



Table 1: Recommendations for Rehab Program Planning

Concept	Recommendation
Components & Functions of Rehabilitation Care	Multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams; continuity and coordination of care; and people centered care and shared decision making. Operationally: standardized symptom assessment, follow-up, and referral
Red Flags for Safe Rehabilitation	Conditional exertional desaturation should be ruled out and managed before consideration of physical exercise training
Referral Principles	Early referral of adults with post COVID-19 condition for appropriate rehabilitation services is suggested
Service Delivery	Hybrid approach of in-person and remote models integrated across all levels of care
Workforce	Include but not limited to Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Nurses, Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Physicians, and Social Workers

Access WHO Guidelines Here:



Figure 1: Recommendations on Clinical Management



Models of Care

- Four Concepts of Safe Rehab: ⁶
 - Avoiding acute events & symptom flare-ups - waxing/waning of symptoms
 - Personalization - symptom stabilization
 - Facilitating expectations - return to health looks different for each person
 - Psychologically supportive - recognizing stigma
- Adaptable for episodic disability and complex care needs ⁷
- Promote continuity of care ⁷
- Incorporate outcome measures for PCC: ⁸
 - Nine core recommended outcome domains including fatigue, PESE, cardiovascular functioning, cognition, nervous system, mental health, pain, physical functioning, and work/occupational challenges

Implications & Conclusion

- To date, no validated intervention(s) exist for rehabilitation of PCC
- Guidelines for PCC continue to evolve based upon best available evidence to support persons with PCC
- Occupational Therapists play an important role in the rehabilitation of this novel complex patient population recognizing the physical, mental, and cognitive implications associated with PCC

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