

Post-Covid Syndrome Service

JHOSC meeting – 27 November 2020

Summary and contents

This presentation includes a summary of the post-Covid Syndrome clinic at UCLH

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UCLH Long Covid Service

- UCLH has developed a post-Covid-19 service to help survivors of the virus with their long-term recovery.
- UCLH established the service at pace in response to concerns about the clinical safety of patients, given a growing appreciation of early and late post-Covid-19 complications and symptoms.
- The multidisciplinary team behind the clinic at University College Hospital have conducted some 1,000 appointments since they started seeing patients in person in May.
- The clinic is held three times a week, and is led by integrated respiratory physicians and brings together multidisciplinary and multi-professional expertise including physiotherapists, respiratory physiologists, psychologists, cardiologists, neurologists and infectious disease doctors.
- We have partnered closely with allied health professionals to understand the nature of support needed by patients and their safety to engage with it. We are increasingly concerned by the severity and nature of prolonged post- Covid-19 symptoms and we feel the need to understand the mechanism of these, and treat them better.
- Patients affected are often of working age and their quality of life has been seriously impacted. Many are NHS staff who have struggled to access adequate care through the usual routes.

How are patients referred into the service?

- UCLH accept referrals from primary care and we have offered follow-up to patients discharged from our own emergency department.
- To access the clinic, patients experiencing post-viral symptoms are encouraged to see their GP and request a referral to UCLH. Referrals from GPs can be sent via email to UCLH.respiratorymedicine@nhs.net.
- The service is currently open to all patients. It is in the process of being formally set up to receive e-referrals and clinic appointments will then be limited to patients from North Central London (NCL).
- However, the service will still provide advice and guidance to GPs outside NCL by email or telephone.
- The team is also working with partners across NCL to co-design pathways to secure appropriate and equitable access of patients to assessment, investigation and post-Covid-19 rehabilitation.

Patient experience

One of the patients who has been through the clinic is Suji Yathindra, a 45-year-old doctor who worked through the height of the pandemic in an emergency department, staying in a hotel away from his wife and children to allow him to work without fear of infecting them.

He developed symptoms of Covid-19 in mid-May. He was assessed at his own hospital and another, with multiple investigations that returned normal results. He suffered a lot of psychological stress as he felt so ill but had no identifiable reason for this.

He was unable to return to work as he could not perform CPR without being exhausted. Testing at UCLH revealed a very abnormal physiological response to exercise, and further investigations are being planned to characterise this and a rehabilitation plan has been developed for him

Suji said: “The clinic helped validate my illness. The team understood how frustrated I was and helped me get back on track. They organised an exercise routine and encouraged me throughout my journey back. They continue to organise investigations to look for a possible cure to my ongoing muscle pain and are in regular contact with me with helpful solutions. Without the clinic I am not sure I would have been able to return to work.”



Research into long-term symptoms

UCLH supports the need for urgent research into the mechanisms underlying post-Covid-19 symptoms.

We are participating in the [PHOSP-COVID study](#) (Post-Hospital Covid), a major UK research study looking at the long-term health impact of Covid-19,” said infectious diseases consultant Dr Michael Marks, who is leading the UCLH component of the national study.

“We will use techniques such as advanced imaging, data collection and analysis of blood and lung samples to create a comprehensive picture of the impact of the viral infection.”

Around 10,000 patients across the UK are expected to take part, making it the largest comprehensive study in the world to understand and improve the health of survivors after hospitalisation from Covid-19.