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## Exploration of Occupational Problems and Concerns in Individuals with Long-Covid (Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2)



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### BACKGROUND

Long-Covid is the persistence of a wide range of symptoms 4 weeks post Covid-19 infection ranging from mild to incapacitating<sup>2</sup>. Currently, there have been over 65 million confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the United States. Approximately 10% of individuals with Covid-19 infection will go on to experience Long-Covid, with women more notably impacted than men<sup>1</sup>.

### PROBLEM

There is currently a gap in literature regarding the occupational performance problems and concerns experienced by individuals with Long-Covid.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this qualitative research type project is to explore the occupational performance problems and concerns experienced by individuals with Long-Covid to fill the gap in literature and guide OT evaluation and intervention.

### Project Objectives:

- PB3:** Collect data via COPM to identify occupational performance problems
- PB4:** Analyze data to identify themes from the results of the COPM.
- PB5:** Disseminate findings to a publication
- PB6:** Educate staff on findings of the study, Evidence-Informed Practice Document and best practices for OT referral

### References

1. Asadi-Pooya, A. A., Akbari, A., Emami, A., Lotfi, M., Rostamihosseinkhani, M., Nemati, H., Barzegar, Z., Kabiri, M., Zeraatpisheh, Z., Farjoud-Kouhanjani, M., Jafari, A., Sasannia, F., Ashrafi, S., Nazeri, M., Nasiri, S., & Shahisavandi, M. (2021). Risk Factors Associated with Long COVID Syndrome: A Retrospective Study. *Iranian Journal of medical sciences*, 46(6), 428–436. <https://doi.org/10.30476/ijms.2021.92080.2326>

2. Raveendran, A. V., Jayadevan, R., & Sashidharan, S. (2021). Long COVID: An overview. *Diabetes & metabolic syndrome*, 15(3), 869–875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2021.04.007>

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### METHODS

Qualitative data was gathered through patient observations, interdisciplinary interviews, and virtual semi-structured participant interviews via the Zoom online platform.

### Staff Interviews:

Various disciplines (OT,PT,RN,RT) were interviewed at Mayo Clinic Florida and online via Zoom to obtain insight into treatment of individuals with Long-Covid. Common themes identified by providers include:

- Increased Anxiety
- Significant Activity Intolerance
- Mind-Body Disconnect
- Need for increased patient education
- Changes in patient identity and role(s) over time

### Client Observations:

Long-Covid patients were observed in the inpatient and outpatient hospital setting. Common themes identified include:

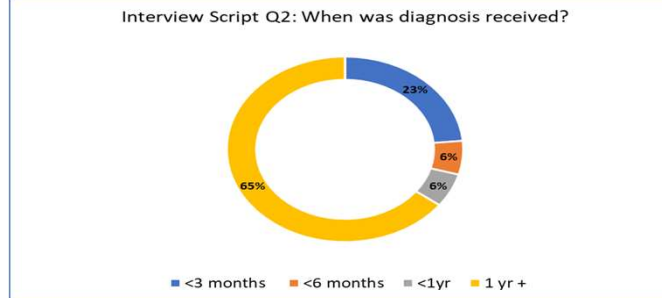
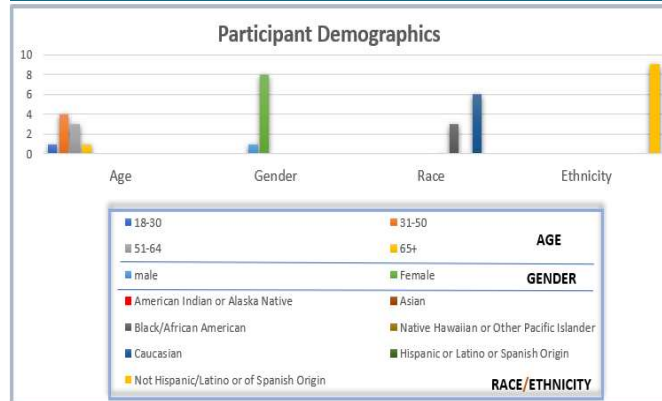
- Increased Anxiety
- Significant Activity Intolerance
- Mind-Body Disconnect
- Financial Impact
- Decreased Quality of Life
- Decreased desire to continue life/ Suicidal thoughts

### Preliminary Interview Script/COPM:

Participants were provided preliminary questions to determine eligibility and participation interest.

- Posted to Facebook Long-Covid support groups
- Participants asked to complete preliminary interview script to determine eligibility for study
- **18** Respondents to interview Script
- **17** respondents determined eligible for study
- **9** respondents in focused interviews

### RESULTS



Long-Covid Literature	Investigator Observation	Participant Report
Fatigue <sup>1</sup> Anxiety <sup>2</sup> Dyspnea <sup>3</sup> Chest Pain <sup>4</sup> Sleep Disturbance/Poor Sleep <sup>5</sup> Concentration <sup>6</sup> Weakness <sup>7</sup> Headache <sup>8</sup> Anosmia <sup>9</sup> Tinnitus <sup>10</sup>	Shortness of Breath Fatigue Weakness Anxiety Neurological Interruption Altered mental state (confusion/mood changes) Slowed mobility Raynaud's Syndrome Foot Drop	Shortness of Breath Pain Body aches Dizziness Anxiety Brain fog Difficulty hearing Fatigue Blurred Vision Impaired Cognition/Memory Taste difficulties Severe Headaches

COPM PARTICIPANT RESULTS		
Top 5 reported Performance Problems	Average Performance Score	Average Satisfaction Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility (decreased endurance to walk, climb steps, deconditioned)</li> <li>• Leisure (adopted sedentary lifestyles)</li> <li>• Managing the home (Cooking, cleaning, taking care of family, pets)</li> <li>• Ability to work/Termination of work</li> <li>• Social participation</li> </ul>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<p><b>Key:</b> (How would you rate the way you do this activity now?) Performance Score (1 = not able to do it at all; 10 = able to do it extremely well) (How satisfied are you with the way you do this activity now?) Satisfaction Score (1 = not satisfied at all; 10 = extremely satisfied)</p>		

\*Scores based on 9 participant responses

### Theoretical Framework:

Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) Model  
**Assessment Tools:**

1. Interview Script
2. Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM)

### DISCUSSION

Long-Covid is a complex illness expected to cause occupational disruption in the lives of an estimated millions of individuals, leading to the need for intervention within this population. With impact spanning from significant activity intolerance to decreased overall quality of life, the need for studies investigating the impact to those affected is immediate. In this study, majority of respondents (88%) were women, consistent with the literature findings of greater impact in this group. Occupations consistently impacted were identified as mobility, work, household management, leisure activities, and social participation. Activity intolerance due to reported fatigue was a consistent factor impacting participation in most of the reported occupations. Overall, perception of performance and satisfaction amongst individuals with Long-Covid was low, suggesting significant impact on occupations. Future studies should consider the large quantity of individuals infected prior to testing and lacking access as testing became available, which may contribute to an underrepresentation of the true impact of Long-Covid. In addition, consideration should be given for those reporting long-haul symptoms triggered post-vaccination. In conclusion, Occupational therapy is well-suited to address the Long-Covid population and contains the holistic expertise needed to adapt and interventions to improve the occupational performance problems and concerns caused by Long-Covid.