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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Post-COVID-19 in Latin America: a call for research and public policies

Post-COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe: un llamado a la investigación y las políticas públicas

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Numerous studies have documented a variety of COVID-19 symptoms that persist for quite some time that compromise people's physical and mental health, diminish their ability to work, and affect their quality of life[1,2]. However, most of these studies have been conducted in Europe, Asia, and the United State. Recent systematic reviews show that very little is known about long COVID-19 in Latin America[3-5].

We suspect the information gap in Latin America and the Caribbean with regard to the collection of epidemiological information about long COVID-19 and what specific actions governments are doing to address it is likely related to the recency of its definition and its translation into diagnosis and practice as well as the limited resources available across already overwhelmed public health systems in the region, among other key reasons. Although the World Health Organization (WHO) offered a specific classification terminology in September 2020 and a clinical definition of the post-COVID-19 condition in October 2021, thus far, the Pan American Health Organization just began addressing these issues in February of 2022. The WHO has defined post-COVID-19 as a condition that:

> "Post-COVID-19 condition occurs in individuals with a history of probable or confirmed SARS-CoV-2

Table 1. Strategic framework for addressing research and public policy post-COVID-19

Recommendations for research and patient follow-up
Start diagnosing post-COVID-19.
Adequately assess the number of symptoms and the initial severity of the disease.
Differentiate between hospitalized and non-hospitalized patients.
Do not use PCR tests as a discharge criterion.
The patient's examination should adequately address the current symptomatic status.
Consider age, gender, previous health status, and the presence of comorbidities.
Inform the patient about the possible manifestations of persistent post-COVID-19.
Establish a course of treatment according to the identified symptoms.
Provide regular follow-up to patients, preferably by electronic means.
Integrate the point of view of patients and/or their families.
Recommendations for establishing public policies
Implement surveillance systems for patients with post-COVID-19.
Develop care guidelines for patients with post-COVID-19 involvement.
Provide specialized training for healthcare personnel.
Organize interprofessional teams to evaluate and address post-COVID-19.
Monitor the development of scientific research in the region and beyond.
Allocate public funds to conduct research on long COVID-19.

PCR: Polymerase chain reaction

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infection, usually 3 months from the onset of COVID-19 with symptoms that last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. Common symptoms include fatigue, shortness of breath, and cognitive dysfunction but also others and generally have an impact on everyday functioning. Symptoms may be new-onset following initial recovery from an acute COVID-19 episode or persist from the initial illness. Symptoms may also fluctuate or relapse over time. A separate definition may be applicable for children"[2]

To tackle the information gap in Latin America and the Caribbean regarding post-COVID-19, we share some recommendations about research and public policies (Table 1).

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Conflicts of interest

Authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical disclosures

Protection of humans and animals. The authors declare that no experiments on humans or animals have been performed for this research.

Confidentiality of data. The authors declare that no patient data appear in this article.

Right to privacy and informed consent. The authors declare that no patient data appear in this article.

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