COVID-19: impact on mental health

 2nd July 2021

**Title:** Pandemic will cast “a long shadow” on mental health, warns England’s CMO

BMJ | 2021; 373: n1655 | 28th June 2021

The covid-19 pandemic will continue to impact mental health and the provision of psychiatric services for a considerable period, England’s chief medical officer has warned.

Speaking at the Royal College of Psychiatrists international congress, held online on 23 June, Chris Whitty stressed that even if the pandemic were to end now, it would cast “a long shadow on mental health, on provision for mental health, on our understanding of disease, and the research elements that will arise from it.”

Whitty said the pandemic had led to considerable fear and public anxiety—particularly at the start of the first wave—and noted the impact of national lockdowns on people’s social support and financial vulnerability. “The mental health elements of the lockdowns and public anxiety were often underplayed,” he told delegates.

Further detail: [Pandemic will cast “a long shadow” on mental health, warns England’s CMO](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1655)

**Title:** Temporal trends in primary care-recorded self-harm during and beyond the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic: time series analysis of electronic healthcare records for 2.8 million patients in the Greater Manchester Care Record

medRxiv | 30th June 2021

Surveillance of clinically treated self-harm episode frequency is an important component of suicide prevention in the dynamic context of COVID-19. Studies published to date have investigated the initial months following the onset of the pandemic, despite national and regional restrictions persisting to Summer 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a sustained impact on help seeking for self-harm. Reductions in primary care recorded self-harm have implications for clinicians’ ability to assess the needs and risks of individuals. Some patients may be experiencing prolonged untreated deterioration in their mental health while other groups are presenting in higher numbers. The findings of this study have important implications for primary care and mental health services in managing ongoing demand.

*Note: This article is a preprint and has not been certified by peer review. It reports new medical research that has yet to be evaluated and so should not be used to guide clinical practice.*

Full paper: [Temporal trends in primary care-recorded self-harm during and beyond the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic: time series analysis of electronic healthcare records for 2.8 million patients in the Greater Manchester Care Record](https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.06.23.21259400v1.full.pdf)

**Title:** COVID-19 and the mental health of children with respiratory illness

The Lancet Respiratory Medicine | 1st July 2021

Children and young people have been deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological problems in children during lockdowns include anxiety, depression, irritability, and boredom; lockdowns were also considered a [contributing factor](https://www.ncmd.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REF253-2020-NCMD-Summary-Report-on-Child-Suicide-July-2020.pdf) in some teenage suicides in the UK.

This article explains how in children and young people with chronic respiratory disorders, mental health issues are more complex than can be ascertained from isolated surveys, and there are certain additional considerations.

Full detail: [COVID-19 and the mental health of children with respiratory illness](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600%2821%2900319-2/fulltext)

**Title:** A systematic review of persistent symptoms and residual abnormal functioning following acute COVID-19: Ongoing symptomatic phase vs. post-COVID-19 syndrome

MedRxiv | 30th June 2020

The objective of this sytematic review was to compare the two phases of long COVID, namely ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 (OSC; signs and symptoms from 4 to 12 weeks from initial infection) and post-COVID-19 syndrome (PCS; signs and symptoms beyond 12 weeks) with respect to symptomatology, abnormal functioning, psychological burden, and quality of life.

The prevalences of OSC and PCS were highly variable. Reported symptoms covered a wide range of body systems, with general overlap in frequencies between the two phases. However, abnormalities in lung function and imaging seemed to be more common in OSC, whilst anxiety, depression, and poor quality of life seemed more frequent in PCS. In general, the quality of the evidence was moderate and further research is needed to better understand the complex interplay of somatic versus psychosocial drivers in long COVID.

Full paper: [A systematic review of persistent symptoms and residual abnormal functioning following acute COVID-19: Ongoing symptomatic phase vs. post-COVID-19 syndrome](https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.06.25.21259372v1)

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