

Long COVID: Navigating Clinical Uncertainty

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“Long Covid, MD” Podcast



DISCLOSURES

None



Objective

- Identify challenges to care for patients with Long COVID
- Identify challenges to clinicians caring for Long COVID patients
- Describe strategies to improve patient outcomes and clinician confidence

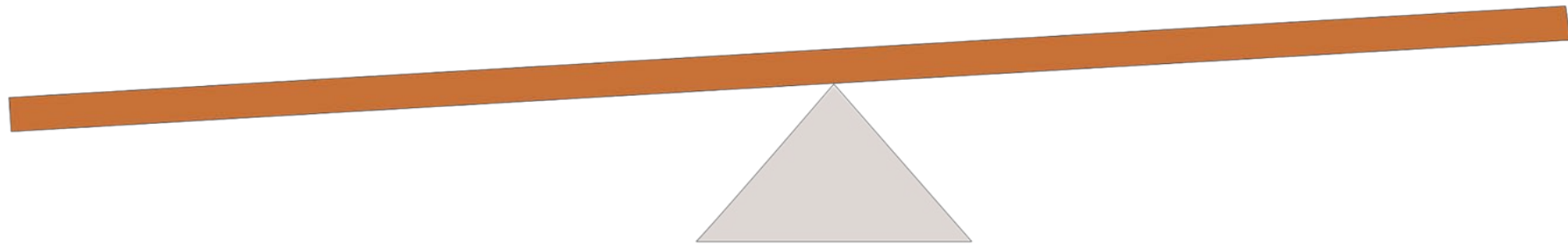
Physician to Patient



Patient Experience in Healthcare

- **Power Imbalance**

- Hierarchy between patient and clinician
- Patients need to present their stories convincingly to clinicians



- **Logistical Struggles**

- Effort required for clinic visits
- Telehealth access and disability accommodations

Clinician Experience in Healthcare

- **Key Challenges:**

- Unfamiliarity with the disease process.
- Fear of medico-legal repercussions (e.g., off-label treatments)
- Navigating patient frustration and dissatisfaction
- Dealing with personal feelings of failure if patients don't improve

Existing Healthcare Model

- **Identify Patterns in Symptoms**
- **Differential**
- **Testing**
- **Diagnosis**
- **Treatment**
- **Follow Markers**

Girl Scout Promise

I will do my best to be

honest and fair,

friendly and helpful,

considerate and caring,

courageous and strong,

and responsible for what I say and do,

and to respect myself and others,

respect authority,

use resources wisely,

make the world a better place,

and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

The Need for a New Paradigm

- **Navigating Uncertainty with Personalized Care:**
 - Lack of guidelines and algorithmic support for treatment
- **Collaboration Over Prescription:**
 - Shift from traditional care models to a patient-clinician partnership
- **Guided Trial-and-Error Approach:**
 - 3 S's: Safe, Structured, (sometimes) Slow
 - Allow patient feedback to inform treatment plan

Strategies for Effective Management

- **Frequent Check-Ins:**
 - Build trust through consistent follow-ups
- **Redefining Help:**
 - Medical, Emotional, Practical Support
- **Focus on Pressing Needs:**
 - Tackle the most disruptive symptoms first
- **Clarity on Treatment Goals:**
 - Harm-Benefit Calculation: Indication, Duration, Side Effects, Goal
 - Failure vs Data
 - Pivot vs End

Referrals and Specialist Integration

- **Symptom-Focused Referrals:**
 - Match symptoms to relevant specialists (e.g., neurologists for headaches)
 - Clarify that referrals are not care transfers but part of a holistic approach

Pulmonology

Medical Home

Cardiology



Neurology

Medical Team

GI

“I’m Sorry I Can’t Help You”

How Can I Help Improve...

- **Body:**
 - **Medical Interventions**
 - **Immediate/Stabilizing Interventions**
 - **Allied Health: OT/PT/SLP**

- **Mind:**
 - Bolster Emotional Resilience
 - Address the emotional toll on patients and caregivers

- **Activities of Daily Living:**
 - Disability resources, pacing strategies, brainstorming
 - Outside-of-insurance healthcare providers

Challenges

- Short appointment times
- Insurance authorizations
- Long waits for referrals/specialists
- Lack of established treatment guidelines
- Patient distrust
- Disinformation

Patient Education and Online Research

- **Empower Patients to Identify Reliable Resources**
 - Guide them to trustworthy websites, podcasts, and experts
- **Foster Positive Online Interactions**
 - Safety vs Innovation
 - Online protocols, supplements, celebrities
- **Support Comfort with Uncertainty**
 - Emphasize that while not all answers are known, progress is achievable.

Patient Education and Online Research



Long Covid, MD



You Can Help

- **Embrace a collaborative, patient-centered approach**
- **Focus on adaptability and continuous learning**
- **Encourage clinicians to advocate for better care models and stay informed about evolving research**
- **Open Mind. Safe Practice.**

Thank you!