

Defining Long COVID: Opportunities and Challenges in Primary Care

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Creating an Evidence Base

- Research on Long COVID is ongoing
- Evidence to support clinical diagnosis, management, and treatment is not yet well developed
 - Diagnostic testing not available or feasible
 - Treatment largely focused on symptom management
- Too many unknowns around long-term care and management of Long COVID
 - Current payment models not sufficient for the level of care necessary for influx of patients with Long COVID

Timely, Accurate Clinical Guidance

- Primary care is the front line for the diagnosis, management, and treatment of Long COVID
- Addressing the urgent need for timely, accurate clinical guidance means rethinking the way we approach guideline development to be more flexible
 - Leveraging increased funding for research to create rapid, agile clinical guidance resources (e.g., living guidelines)
 - Developing a centralized repository of latest best practices and evidence-based recommendations for Long COVID.

Whole-Person Care, Continuity

- PCPs make up nearly 90% of physicians working in community health centers and are the main source of care for patients managing chronic conditions
- PCPs uniquely positioned to coordinate care across the care team for patients with Long COVID
 - Bi-directional referral and closed-loop reporting back to the PCP critical
- Proximity and cost continue to be barriers to patients accessing primary care

Support for Primary Care

- COVID-19 has demonstrated the urgency of robust, well-trained, and accessible primary care
 - Efforts must also take into consideration the significant and ongoing challenges primary care clinicians are facing
- Support for Long COVID care begins with support for primary care
 - Invest in the development of a robust primary care workforce
 - Invest in the mental health needs of PCPs; combat administrative burden
 - Support continued coordination and collaboration among primary care organizations

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