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EDITORIAL

EVIDENCE IN THE POST-COVID-19 SYNDROME FOLLOW-UP: ANOTHER CHALLENGING COMMITMENT OF SCIENCE

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In about two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has strongly affected everyday life and health systems in all countries. The health, economic, educational, cultural, and social systems were the most affected and had direct impacts in the population's health-disease process in the face of a life threat, in addition to the direct impacts on the health of those who became ill, lost their lives prematurely or lost their relatives.

Although COVID-19 is a disease of viral etiology, characterized as acute and contagious, the time elapsed since the pandemic showed that a great portion of people has long-term consequences[1-2]. After the acute phase, the persistent symptoms are called long COVID or post-COVID-19 syndrome[1-3].

Evidence from the first 546 members of the COVID-19 Paraná/UEM Cohort[4], which follows adults and older adults after the acute phase of the disease in the state of Paraná, indicates the theme's relevance for future studies. Among the signs and symptoms that persisted for at least 12 months in adults and elderly, regardless of their severity, the most prevalent were memory loss (29%), tiredness/fatigue (27%), shortness of breath (19%), anxiety (17%), depression (15%), hair loss (14%), change in vision (13%), tingling or numbness in some part of the body (12%), change in appetite (9%) and headache (8%). The severity of persistent symptoms was more noticeable in cohort members with moderate and severe forms in the acute phase, compared to mild cases[4].

Among members of the cohort with the most severe form of the disease (therapy in the ICU), the persistence of at least 12 months of shortness of breath and tiredness/fatigue was reported, respectively, by 33% and 40%, of adults and 15% and 26% of older adults. The higher prevalence in adults than in older adults may suggest a survival bias for healthier older adults[4].

Given this complex context and the available scientific evidence, the challenge of science in following people who have had COVID-19 increases, to identify the duration and severity of symptoms and guide actions on the subject, whether in the organization of the health care network services and the implementation of achievable public policies in the provision of care in the long term rehabilitation[1-4].

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