

Rehabilitation interventions for people
with post-COVID-19 conditions
English summary

Une production de l'Institut national
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SUMMARY

Rehabilitation interventions for people with post-COVID-19 conditions

Introduction

Some people who contract COVID-19 experience one or more symptoms that last for several weeks to several months after infection. Given the number of people who have contracted the virus and still-active transmission of the infection, a significant number of people may be grappling with a post-COVID-19 condition. This could put an additional strain on Quebec's healthcare system.

The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) asked the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux (INESSS) to support front-line professionals with the clinical management of post-COVID-19 conditions. As part of this work, INESSS developed a tool as well as four additional fact sheets on 1) post-exertional malaise and fatigue, 2) neurological manifestations, 3) cardiopulmonary manifestations, and 4) altered smell and taste.

In addition, a complementary sheet was developed for rehabilitation workers, e.g., dietitians/nutritionists, occupational therapists, kinesiologists, neuropsychologists, speech language pathologists, physiotherapists and social workers. It is intended to provide an overview of useful information for rehabilitation workers working with people who have post-COVID-19 conditions. While not targeting any specific profession, the fact sheet contains the main elements of information common to all rehabilitation professionals from an interprofessional perspective. This fact sheet is the subject of this report.

Methodology

The complementary fact sheet for rehabilitation workers was developed through a rapid review of clinical practice guides, expert consensus, guidelines or any other documents containing clinical recommendations for rehabilitation interventions available to people with post-COVID-19 conditions. The documents listed in the literature search were selected independently by two scientific professionals using established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The data extraction and the methodological quality assessment were carried out by one scientific professional.

The clinical recommendations developed stem from analyzing and synthesizing the data gathered in the literature search and from analyzing and integrating the perspective of Quebec experts and users suffering from post-COVID-19 conditions. The contextual information and various perspectives were obtained mainly by consulting stakeholders in the Monitoring Committee and the Advisory Committee which were set up as part of the work. In addition, potential future users were consulted in order to ensure the overall quality and clarity of the tool and its applicability, as well as the completeness of the information presented.

Finally, the fact sheet and the supporting report were sent to three external readers to assess the relevance of the content and the overall scientific quality of these documents.

Results

Fourteen documents on assessment and rehabilitation intervention related to post-COVID-19 conditions were selected for this work.

The fact sheet first presents general information on the definition of post-COVID-19 conditions and provides descriptions of clinical manifestations, including fatigue and post-exertional malaise.

Next, there is a section that addresses general principles by highlighting the importance of safety in the rehabilitation management of post-COVID-19 conditions, in particular by taking into account post-exertional malaise during assessments and rehabilitation interventions. In addition, the psychological and psychosocial impact of post-COVID-19 conditions on an individual and, more broadly, on his/her family and loved ones emerged as a central element to be taken into account in order to promote recovery. It also appears that interprofessional collaboration and a sharedcare approach with the person and those around them are to be preferred.

The section on rehabilitation assessment sets out the various elements that need to be assessed, such as clinical manifestations, their impact on overall functioning, the achievement of lifestyle habits and the individual's quality of life as well as his/her expectations, preferences and available support. This section also documents specific assessment elements related to fatigue, post-exertional malaise, cardiopulmonary or cognitive manifestations, nutritional status and alterations in smell and taste.

Finally, the section on rehabilitation interventions includes information on the rehabilitation objectives, general intervention principles, including supporting individuals in monitoring and managing signs and symptoms and avoiding relapses, as well as precautions that need to be observed during interventions. Recommendations for a few specific manifestations such as post-exertional malaise and returning to work are also proposed as ways to support rehabilitation workers.

Conclusion

The supplementary fact sheet on managing post-COVID-19 conditions for rehabilitation workers is based on clinical practice recommendations, which were supplemented with the perspectives of the different stakeholders and with contextual elements. While not a substitute for clinical judgment, the recommendations should contribute to the sound management of people with post-COVID-19 conditions. Finally, as knowledge on the subject evolves, it will be possible to update and upgrade the information and recommendations proposed in the fact sheet for rehabilitation workers.

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