

implementation; personalized and multilevel care. This new condition challenged health services and health professionals to keep adjusting and updating responses in a context of uncertainty, but at the same time revealed the usual challenges and needs for providing timely and integrated care. Health services burden challenges the implementation of care standards. This heterogeneous condition demands a multi-level response, including general information and advice, enabling self-management, and providing rehabilitation. **Conclusions:** Healthcare professionals envision an heterogeneous condition, bringing uncertainty to healthcare services. More research, training, and information to the population is required for an appropriate response.

Key messages:

- Persisting symptoms following COVID-19 challenged an already overwhelmed health system, bringing barriers to healthcare standards implementation.
- The heterogeneous nature of the condition and the healthcare services burden may leave some people to chance, demanding a diverse set of care.

Abstract citation ID: ckae144.1941

Experiences of treating people with persisting symptoms after COVID-19: a focus group study

Ana Goes

A Goes¹, M Santos², J Silva¹, M Moniz¹, P Soares^{1,3}, A Leite^{1,3}

¹NOVA National School of Public Health, Lisbon, Portugal

²ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Cent, ISCTE, Lisbon, Portugal

³National Institute of Health Dr. Ricardo Jorge, INSA, Lisbon, Portugal

Contact: ana.goes@ensp.unl.pt

Background: A proportion of people who had COVID-19 infection continue to suffer with persistent symptoms. The long-term effects of COVID-19 are recognised as heterogeneous and complex, challenging health services. This study aims to explore the experiences of healthcare professionals dealing with patients suffering from persisting symptoms following COVID-19 infection and their views on the healthcare services response.

Methods: We held 4 focus groups (n = 19) with healthcare professionals by video-call. Healthcare professionals were recruited using a snowball strategy, taking level of care, healthcare area, and nature of function as diversification criteria. Participants were invited to tell their experiences regarding the following topics: experiences and challenges in providing care to patients with persisting symptoms following COVID-19 infection; usual care pathways; models of care. Data were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized. The qualitative data were submitted to thematic analysis following an inductive approach. A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (MaxQDA) was used.

Results: Based on thematic analysis, 4 core themes emerged: uncertainty; new condition, usual challenges; variable standards