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UCL researchers lead Ã?Â£11m projects to investigate Long Covid syndromes

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Research data from 60,000 people over three years to help define what Long Covid is and improve diagnosis



The recently funded UK Long Covid studies were recommended by an independent panel of research experts and patients with Long Covid.

As reported by UC, about one in 10 people with Covid-19 continue to experience symptoms and impaired quality of life beyond 12 weeks. Long Covid may comprise several distinct syndromes that aren't yet fully characterized and understood. A systematic review has highlighted 55 different long-term effects but common symptoms of Long Covid include breathlessness, headaches, cough, fatigue, and cognitive implementation or "brain fog."

Professor Nishi Chaturvedi (MRC Unit for Lifelong Health & Ageing at UCL) and Professor Sir Terence Stephenson (UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health) are leading two new studies on Long Covid announced by the UK Government.

Professor Chaturvedi's project, awarded £9.6 million from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), will use data from 60,000 people over three years to help define what Long Covid is and improve diagnosis. Professor Stephenson's study, awarded £1.36 million, will study Long Covid in 11- to 17-year-olds.

They are among four major studies funded by NIHR and UKRI to help improve understanding of the causes, symptoms and treatment of the longer-term effects of Covid-19 in people who have not become unwell enough to be admitted to hospital.

Professor Chaturvedi's study will seek to explain why some people get the condition, the typical effects on a person's health and ability to work, and the factors that affect recovery. Researchers will analyse data from a combination of national anonymised electronic health records and ongoing longitudinal studies of people of all ages in the UK (including four cohort studies hosted by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, and the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children).

From these studies, people reporting Long Covid and comparator groups will be asked to wear a wristband measuring exercise ability, breathing, and heart rate. Participants will complete online questionnaires on mental health and cognitive

function. They will also be invited to a clinic for non-invasive imaging to look at potential organ damage.

Professor Stephenson's CLoCk Study, meanwhile, will identify symptoms of Long Covid among children and young people who were not hospitalised. The research will assess risk factors, prevalence and how long Long Covid lasts. It will also establish a medical diagnosis and operational definition of the condition, and look at how it might be treated.

"It is really important in science to 'believe what you hear, not hear what you believe' and so we plan to ask 3,000 children and young people to tell us about the impact of Covid-19 infection on their health over the next two years. We will also ask 3,000 young people who tested negative for Covid-19 the same questions. That will help us tease out whether ongoing problems are due to Covid-19 infection or due to Covid-19 lockdown, social isolation, and disruption of schools and friendships.