

COVID-19 pandemic - are the biggest challenges yet?

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To the Editor,

The COVID-19 pandemic is a huge challenge for both the health service and the society struggling with the disease [1,2]. However, it is necessary to look at COVID-19 more broadly, not only from the perspective of hospitalization but also with patients after COVID-19 who come to us. To date, chronic symptoms such as fatigue, "brain fog", depression, shortness of breath, cough, and muscle and joint pain have been commonly reported [3]. The best known ones were those from the respiratory system, showing long-term damage to lung tissue. The latest studies also found a 5-fold high risk of Guillain-Barré syndrome and an 11-fold high risk of encephalomyelitis in people having COVID-19, which may lead to further complications in the future [4]. COVID-19 also significantly increases the risk of the first heart attack (three to eight times) and the first stroke (three to six times). According to the study, the risk gradually decreased but remained elevated for at least four weeks. Importantly, the study did not include people who had previously had a heart attack or stroke, which may suggest that the risk of another heart attack or stroke may be significantly higher [5]. Attention should also be paid to the incidence of myocarditis, which is 16 times higher in people with COVID-19, and the incidence of myocarditis in COVID-19 has been estimated at approximately 150 per 100,000 patients. Inflammation of the heart muscle can lead to dysfunction of parts of the heart and increase the risk of heart failure [6]. Study involving COVID-19 survivors with symptoms lasting at least 30 days found around 5% of them experienced at least a 30% decrease in a critical measure of kidney function (eGFR). This study shows that people with long-COVID-19 were 25% more likely to develop a 30% decline in eGFR [7]. Currently, LONG-COVID-19 syndrome occurs in 5% of vaccinated patients and 11% in the unvaccinated group [8]. Patients after COVID-19 will come to us more often, especially with such a high percentage of virus infection. The only limitation in the incidence of complications is the vaccination. We should pay special attention to the function of the cardiovascular, kidney and respiratory systems, as well as consider creating an algorithm for managing patients with POST-COVID-19 and screening of the public in primary care points.

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