



Long COVID in Canada: Evidence to Inform Health Equity-based Public Health Action

Briefing to the Technical Advisory Committee, April 26th, 2021

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Context: Early work on COVID-19's wider health impacts

- **April 2020:** PHAC was tasked with developing an Evidence Plan, for gathering information needed to understand the wider health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Aimed to generate evidence quickly, working together with and using data from Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and Statistics Canada.
- Key health issues/questions and priority populations identified through wide consultation
- **May 2020:** Early presentation to FPT COVID-19 Special Advisory Committee highlighted key issues and priority populations
- **October 2020:** CPHO 2020 Annual Report focused on COVID-19 and addressed early evidence of the wider impacts of the pandemic

Key topics include:

- Family violence
- Self-harm/Suicide
- Chronic conditions (including long COVID)
- Problematic substance use
- Food insecurity
- Health-related behaviours
- Mental health
- Alcohol labelling

Long COVID and PHAC's role

- The issue of long COVID is garnering increased attention
- Early evidence is showing long COVID presenting as long-term health outcomes involving cardiovascular, pulmonary, hematologic, renal, gastrointestinal, and central nervous systems, plus psychosocial health effects, e.g.
 - Fatigue, general pain or discomfort
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Shortness of breath
- PHAC is conducting a systematic review on long COVID with a focus on its symptoms and prevalence (complete draft is currently under review)
- The Best Brain Exchange on long COVID is also timely and important for better understanding evidence gaps, including those related to health equity

Long COVID Best Brains Exchange, May 13th 2021

Best Brains Exchange (BBE) objectives:

- **Gain an understanding** of heterogeneity of the long COVID lived experience, and current Canadian and international evidence base:
 - the unique experiences of sub groups/populations that are disproportionately affected by Long COVID, and associated health equity issues in Canada
 - the risk and protective factors to Long COVID
- **Identify outstanding evidence gaps** (both surveillance and research) that need to be filled to inform appropriate public health action.
- **Establish a conceptual framework** for prioritizing evidence gaps, and share plans or potential opportunities to address them.
- **Establish a network of experts** on Long COVID, to support future public health action, from prevention through to management of long-term population and public health impacts.



Next steps and questions

- P/T jurisdictions are invited to participate (through SAC)
- Diversity of perspectives and participants – including lived experience and equity seeking groups
- Will debrief and discuss way forward with TAC / SAC after BBE
- Questions for TAC:
 - What work is underway in the jurisdictions?
 - What are your early thoughts on surveillance and research priorities?
 - Do you have any suggestions or comments on the BBE's scope, objectives, agenda?