

News From the JAMA Network

Long COVID in Children

Postacute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC) appears to be uncommon in children and presents with features different from long COVID in adults, according to a cohort study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* that included 659 286 children.

Investigators used electronic health records from 9 US children's hospitals to collect data on children and adolescents who had an antigen or reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test for SARS-CoV-2. The average age of the children in the study was 8.1 years. In the study sample, 9.1% tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

Among children who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, 41.9% had at least 1 systemic (conditions), syndromic (symptoms), or medication feature of PASC compared with 38.2% of children who tested negative. The most common symptoms were loss of taste or smell, the most common condition was myocarditis, and the most common medication features were use of cough and cold preparations. Children who had the highest risk of PASC were those admitted to intensive care during their illness, children younger than 5 years, and children with comorbid complex chronic conditions, according to the study.

Long-term complications commonly reported in adults include neurological symptoms, such as headache, vertigo, and paresthesia (pins-and-needles tingling), but these were not significant findings in this study of children. Also, the memory loss and brain fog documented in adults were not identified in the children studied, possibly because they were not captured in diagnosis codes, according to the authors.

"Our findings suggest that the burden and risk windows of PASC may differ between children and adults. Future studies, including long-term prospective studies, such as the National Institutes of Health [Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery] RECOVER Initiative, are needed to fully elucidate PASC phenotypes," the authors concluded.

Psilocybin for Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder

Using psilocybin (a psychedelic commonly known as "magic mushrooms") in combina-

tion with psychotherapy reduced the percentage of heavy drinking days of patients with alcohol use disorder, according to a randomized clinical trial published in *JAMA Psychiatry*. The trial expands on a proof-of-concept study in 2015 that found psilocybin was well tolerated by patients dependent on alcohol and that it had reduced drinking.



Participants in the current trial were offered 12 weeks of psychotherapy and received psilocybin or the placebo medication diphenhydramine, which is a sedating antihistamine, during 2 day-long medication sessions at weeks 4 and 8. At week 4, participants received either 25 mg/70 kg of psilocybin or 50 mg of diphenhydramine. At week 8, participants received 25 to 40 mg/70 kg of psilocybin or 50 to 100 mg of diphenhydramine. After receiving the study medication, participants were required to stay with a therapist for at least 8 hours and encouraged to lie on a couch while listening to music and wearing eyeshades. Psychotherapy for both groups included motivational enhancement therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Analysis of the trial's primary outcome included 93 of 95 patients who were randomized. In the 32 weeks following the first dose of the study medication, the percentage of heavy drinking days was 9.7% in the psilocybin group and 23.6% in the diphenhydramine group. No serious adverse events were associated with psilocybin.

A limitation of the study is that nearly all participants and therapists correctly guessed the assigned medication in this double-blind randomized clinical trial "so biased expectancies could have influenced results." Still, the researchers concluded that "these results provide support for further study of psilocybin-assisted treatment for [alcohol use disorder]."

Chronic Disease Burden and Financial Problems Are Intertwined

The likelihood of financial problems increases with a greater number of chronic medical conditions, according to the results of a study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Researchers analyzed insurance claims data linked to commercial credit data for adults enrolled in a commercial preferred provider organization in Michigan to describe the association between chronic disease and patients' financial outcomes.

In the study population that included more than 2.8 million adults, 9.6% had medical debt in collections, 8.3% had non-medical debt in collections, 16.3% had delinquent debt, 19.3% had a low credit score, and 0.6% had recent bankruptcy. When compared with healthy individuals, those with the highest number of chronic diseases—7 to 13 conditions—had a higher likelihood of having medical and nonmedical debt in collections, delinquent debt, a low credit score, or recent bankruptcy, with the financial burden increasing with each chronic disease.

For individuals with medical debt in collections, those with no chronic diseases owed an estimated \$784 compared with \$1252 for people with 7 to 13 conditions. Rates and amounts of medical debt varied by specific chronic disease. The conditions with the largest increase in the probability of having medical debt in collections were substance use disorders, serious mental illness, congestive heart failure, dementia, and stroke.

"Further research into the causal mechanisms of these associations is critical to develop policies to improve financial

outcomes for patients with chronic conditions," the researchers wrote.

Fertility Preservation After Breast Cancer Diagnosis

More evidence about the safety of fertility preservation procedures in women with breast cancer is reported in a study in *JAMA Oncology*.

Fertility preservation with or without hormonal stimulation was not statistically significantly associated with any increased

risk of relapse or death from breast cancer in this population-based Swedish cohort [study](#).

The study included 1275 women aged 21 to 42 years at the time of their breast cancer diagnosis. There were 425 women who had fertility preservation treatments (58 women had cryopreservation of ovarian tissue, 362 women had controlled ovarian stimulation for cryopreservation of oocytes embryos, and 5 women had a combination of these methods).

"Women diagnosed with [breast cancer] during their reproductive years should be referred, when interested, for fertility counseling and provided with the available information on safety of the procedures that are offered. Future research evaluating long-term safety of [fertility preservation] in young women with [breast cancer] should ideally include even longer follow-up," the researchers concluded. — **Anita Slomski**

Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.