**Long COVID in Higher Education: Initial Student Cases and Requests for Accommodations**

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**OVERVIEW**

- Emerging research shows individuals with previous SARS-CoV-2 infections may experience persistent symptoms known as “Long COVID.”

- Long COVID symptoms can include cardiac abnormalities, cognitive impairment, fatigue, and other issues.

- There is an increased focus on Long COVID research; however, as this is an emerging condition, many elements of Long COVID remain unclear (Pfaff et al., 2022; Purpura & Ryan, 2022).

- Approximately one in 20 people who were diagnosed with COVID-19 had lingering symptoms associated with Long COVID six to 18 months following the initial infection (Hastie et al., 2022).

- Long COVID cases continue to increase within the higher education environment and disability resource professionals (DRPs) warn that postsecondary institutions must better support the emerging student disability group (Redden, 2021).

- It is essential to explore how the higher education community supports students with Long COVID as they return to higher education.

**METHODS**

- Data for this project were collected through a survey instrument developed by the authors and disseminated primarily through the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD).

- The survey instrument included questions about reported student Long COVID cases, the perceived challenges supporting student Long COVID, and strategies and recommendations for supporting students with Long COVID.

- Prior to data collection, the authors piloted the survey with DRP content and Long COVID experts to ensure the accessibility and the appropriate question development of the instrument.

**FINDINGS**

- On average, approximately 39 students per institution requested disability support services for their Long COVID symptoms during 21/22 AY.

- On average, approximately 11 students per institution received accommodations for their Long COVID symptoms during 21/22 AY.

- Over half of the DRPs indicated that students requesting accommodations for their Long COVID diagnoses due to feeling mentally foggy (67.9%) and having problems concentrating (58.6%), with nearly one-half indicating students requesting disability support services for problems remembering (43.6%).

- Approximately one-third of surveyed DRPs reported students requesting accommodations due to sleep-related Long COVID symptoms (e.g., drowsiness 30.7%).

- Additionally, DRPs reported a larger proportion of somatic-related symptoms for Long COVID accommodation requests including fatigue (53.6%), headaches (40.7%), and breathing issues (33.6%).

- Of the surveyed DRPs, less disability resource offices required formal documentation for Long COVID accommodation requests, compared to non-Long COVID accommodation requests.

**CONCLUSION**

- With greater awareness of Long COVID, it can be assumed that more cases, including students requiring disability accommodations will increase over time.

- Accurately tracking the amount and potential shifts in Long COVID symptom trends over time will be an important aspect specific to this research.

- It will be important for postsecondary administrators to remain connected with other institutions to gauge student cases and student support models between disability resource offices and counseling and advisement services that support the success of students with Long COVID.

- While the 2021-2022 academic year served as the first time in history that students needed accommodations for a Long COVID diagnosis, it is very possible that students will need future support related to Long COVID symptoms (Vance & Aquino, 2023).

- Moving forward, the higher education community will need to establish clear guidelines on how to support these student cases to ensure their success within the postsecondary setting.