

COVID-19 Associated Cystitis

Long haul patients may struggle with chronic urinary symptoms

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Santa Rosa, CA) Since the onset of the pandemic, some COVID-19 patients have developed severe “de novo” (new) genitourinary symptoms, including urinary frequency greater than 13 voids per day, as well as the need to urinate 5 or more times per night to relieve discomfort in their bladder.(1,2)

Systemic inflammation and an unusually high inflammatory response (aka cytokine storm syndrome) has been found in severe cases of COVID-19. Not surprisingly, these increased inflammatory markers (cytokines) have also been found in the urine and bladder of some COVID-19 patients. Cytokines can cause damage to the urothelium triggering the classic symptoms of urinary frequency, urgency, pressure and/or pain. Unfortunately, some clinicians have mistakenly assumed that these patients were struggling with a routine bacterial infection.(3) The cytokine storm may also result in kidney injury.(4)

In the most severe patients, there is concern that COVID-19 could also be infecting the bladder wall. Though uncommon, other viral infections (HIV, HTLV and polyoma BK) have been known to cause urinary symptoms.(5,6,7) Fourteen studies have found active COVID-19 virus in urine samples, more commonly in patients with moderate or severe disease.(8)

“For patients who already struggle with urinary symptoms such as interstitial cystitis, COVID-19 has caused severe flares in their symptoms leaving patients desperate for relief” offered Jill Osborne founder of the Interstitial Cystitis Network. *“Our survey of more than 90 IC and COVID-19 patients found that 74% reported that their IC*

symptoms were exacerbated, even patients who had been in remission for years. 34% reported that their pain increased severely while 42% reported a moderate or slight increase in pain. Urinary frequency showed similar changes.” (9)

September 1st launches the annual IC Awareness Month campaign. We want these patients to know that COVID Associated Cystitis is real and should be treated with compassion. We encourage patients to share this information with their clinicians. While many of the IC self-help tips and treatments could be helpful for some patients, IC patients with long haul Covid-19 may need more aggressive care and pain therapies. There is no shame in having urinary symptoms.

Learn more about IC Awareness Month at: www.icawareness.org

Contact:

Jill H. Osborne MA
Interstitial Cystitis Network
707-538-9442
icnetwork@mac.com

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