



Solve ME/CFS Initiative

Leading the Fight to cure ME/CFS

America's Looming Health Crisis: COVID Patients Who Never Recover

APRIL 15, 2020 -- The virus COVID-19 is anticipated to infect as many as 214 million Americans, cause the hospitalization of 21 million people, and 3.5 million Americans may never return to health, resulting in a cost of over *\$48 billion annually for the rest of their lives* in lost productivity and increased medical costs.

"These symptoms were very reminiscent of CFS/ME... While the current covid-19 pandemic is caused by a different virus, it is a member of the same coronavirus family, so it might also cause a post-viral fatigue syndrome. That's what I'm worried about."

- Dr. Harvey Moldofsky, Institute of Medical Science at the University of Toronto

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) is classified as a neurological disease by the World Health Organizationⁱⁱ and is known for afflicting people following viral infections.ⁱⁱⁱ

1. Some COVID-19 patients are exhibiting ME/CFS-like symptoms^{iv} (nearly 35% of patients)^v
2. Coronaviruses trigger ME/CFS^{vi}. Experts are estimating significant surges in ME/CFS cases following the pandemic, **up to 3,570,000 new ME/CFS cases**^{vii}, more than doubling the existing cases in the United States in 36 months.
3. ME/CFS epidemics have historically followed viral outbreaks, such as the current COVID-19 epidemic^{viii}.
4. Our frontline responders are not equipped to identify and diagnose post-viral neuroimmune disease.

In the past 4 years, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have grown the field of ME/CFS research and built a network of disease experts and scientists at the leading edge of the field of post-viral neuroimmune diagnostics and treatment. Given the clear connection to the COVID-19 crisis, the ME/CFS research community is an untapped scientific resource that will be vital to existing COVID-19 scientific, diagnostic, and treatment efforts.

COVID-19 Response Recommendation

Solve M.E. is calling for immediate congressional action to enable current NIH ME/CFS research programs to tackle these new neuroimmune related COVID-19 challenges. **Solve M.E. recommends:**

- Authorization and appropriation of at least \$15 million a year over 4 years to the Director of the NIH to conduct and support post-viral neuroimmune disease research
- Research focus on diagnosis, treatment, and risk factors of post-viral chronic neuroimmune diseases; specifically ME/CFS, *COVID-19 patients exhibiting ME/CFS symptoms, and survivors of COVID-19 with ME/CFS.*
- NIH should implement:
 1. post-viral neuroimmune disease data collection and sharing;
 2. new and expanded current Collaborative Research Centers to meet COVID-19 goals;
 3. launching (or expanding) NIH intramural ME/CFS research to incorporate COVID-19 patients;
 4. new ME/CFS and COVID-19 disease specific competitive funding opportunities with set-aside funds, prioritizing new and early career researchers.



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About Solve ME/CFS Initiative

Founded in 1987, Solve ME/CFS Initiative (Solve M.E.) is the national non-profit disease organization representing ME/CFS researchers, patients, and caregivers in the US. Our mission is to make this devastating disease widely understood, diagnosable, and treatable. *Solve M.E. is the largest US provider of private competitive research funding exclusively for ME/CFS.* Our investments and programs accelerate the discovery of safe and effective treatments for ME/CFS, work aggressively toward expansion of research funds, and engages the ME/CFS community in research, advocacy and patient support.

www.SolveME.org

ⁱ Wilson, Clare (4/15/20). *NewScientist* “Could the coronavirus trigger post-viral fatigue syndromes?” <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24632783-400-could-the-coronavirus-trigger-post-viral-fatigue-syndromes/#ixzz6Ji0drMeu>

ⁱⁱ World Health Organization (1969). *International Classification of Diseases* (PDF). 2 (Eighth revision ed.). Geneva: WHO. p. 173. Encephalomyelitis (chronic), (myalgic, benign) 323

ⁱⁱⁱ Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER) (4/15/20) “Chronic Fatigue Syndrome” <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chronic-fatigue-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20360490>

^{iv} Rabin, Roni Caryn (4/1/20). *The New York Times* “Some Coronavirus Patients Show Signs of Brain Ailments” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/health/coronavirus-stroke-seizures-confusion.html>

^v Mao, Ling et al (2/25/20). *medRxiv* “Neurological Manifestations of Hospitalized Patients with COVID-19 in Wuhan, China: a retrospective case series study” <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.02.22.20026500v1>

^{vi} Moldofsky, Harvey et al (3/24/11). *BMC Neurology* “Chronic widespread musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, depression and disordered sleep in chronic post-SARS syndrome; a case-controlled study” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3071317/#B26>

^{vii} Topple, Steve (3/15/20). *theCanary* “The other potential coronavirus catastrophe no one is talking about” <https://www.thecanary.co/global/world-analysis/2020/03/15/the-other-potential-coronavirus-catastrophe-no-one-is-talking-about/>

^{viii} Hyde, Byron et al (1992). “The Clinical and Scientific Basis of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome” <https://www.scribd.com/document/341397900/The-Clinical-and-Scientific-Basis-of-Myalgic-Encephalomyelitis-Chronic-Fatigue-Syndrome-Byron-M-Hyde-M-D>