



# The Psychosocial Impact of COVID: Recognizing family dynamics and how they impact patients

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Presented by Kaethe Weingarten, Ph.D., Director, Witness to Witness Program

February 21, 2023

MIGRANT CLINICIANS NETWORK



# Conflict of Interest Disclosure

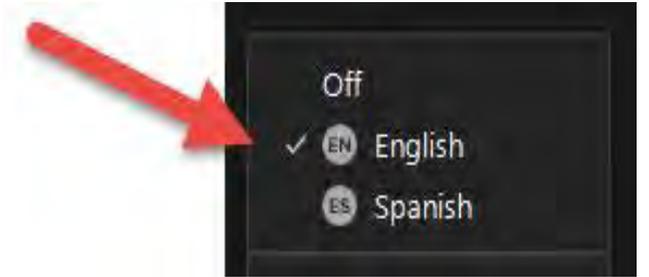
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## SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION ZOOM

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## ***FUNCION DE INTERPRETACION SIMULTANEA***

*Desde su pantalla por computadora en la barra de herramientas, pulse en el icono de Interpretación/que se ve como un mundo, un menú aparecerá, seleccione el lenguaje en que quiere escuchar.*

*Desde su teléfono pulse en más opciones y seleccione interpretación y elija el lenguaje que quiera escuchar.*



MIGRANT CLINICIANS NETWORK



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**A force for health justice**

Our mission is to create practical solutions at the intersection of vulnerability, migration and health

We envision a world based on health justice and equity, where migration is never an impediment to well-being.

# Our Work



# MCN's Primary Constituents

- Primary Care Providers
- Community Health Workers
- Nurses
- Dentists
- Social Workers
- Outreach Workers
- Public Health Professionals
- Health Educators
- Medical Assistants

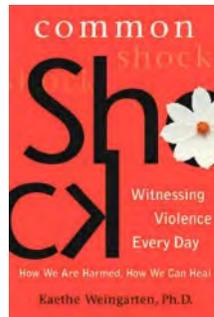


## **Kaethe Weingarten, Ph.D.**

Founder and Director of the **Witness to Witness Program**

**Associate Clinical Professor** of Psychology, Harvard Medical School, 1981 – 2017

**Taught the Program in Families, Trauma and Resilience** at the Family Institute of Cambridge



**Author of *Common Shock: Witnessing Violence Every Day – How We Are Harmed, How We Can Heal***

Disease

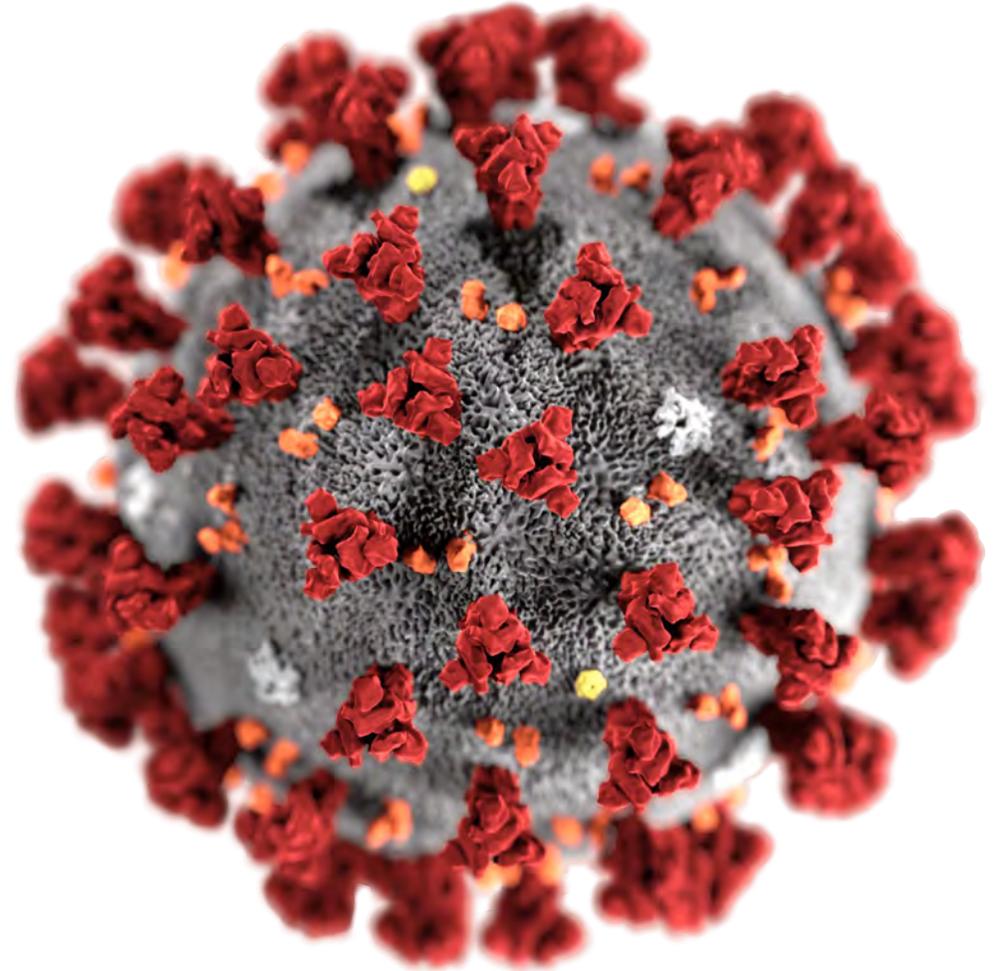
COVID-19

SARS-CoV-2

2019-nCov

HCoV-19

Virus Name



## Latest on COVID-19 Pandemic

**671.6 Million**

**infections**

in 192 countries and regions

**6.8 Million**

**deaths**

have been reported worldwide

**102.3 Million**

**infections**

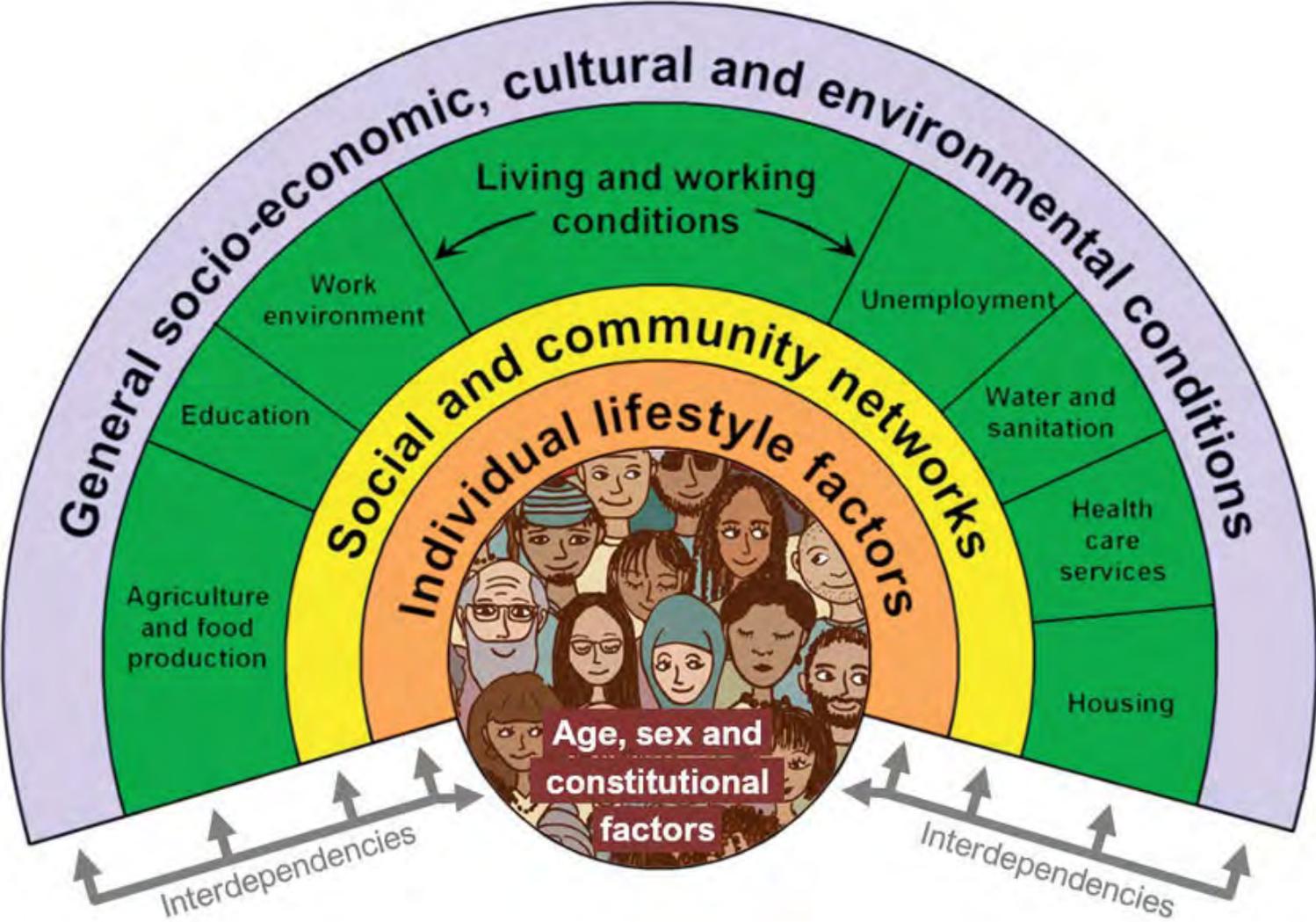
have been reported in the U.S.

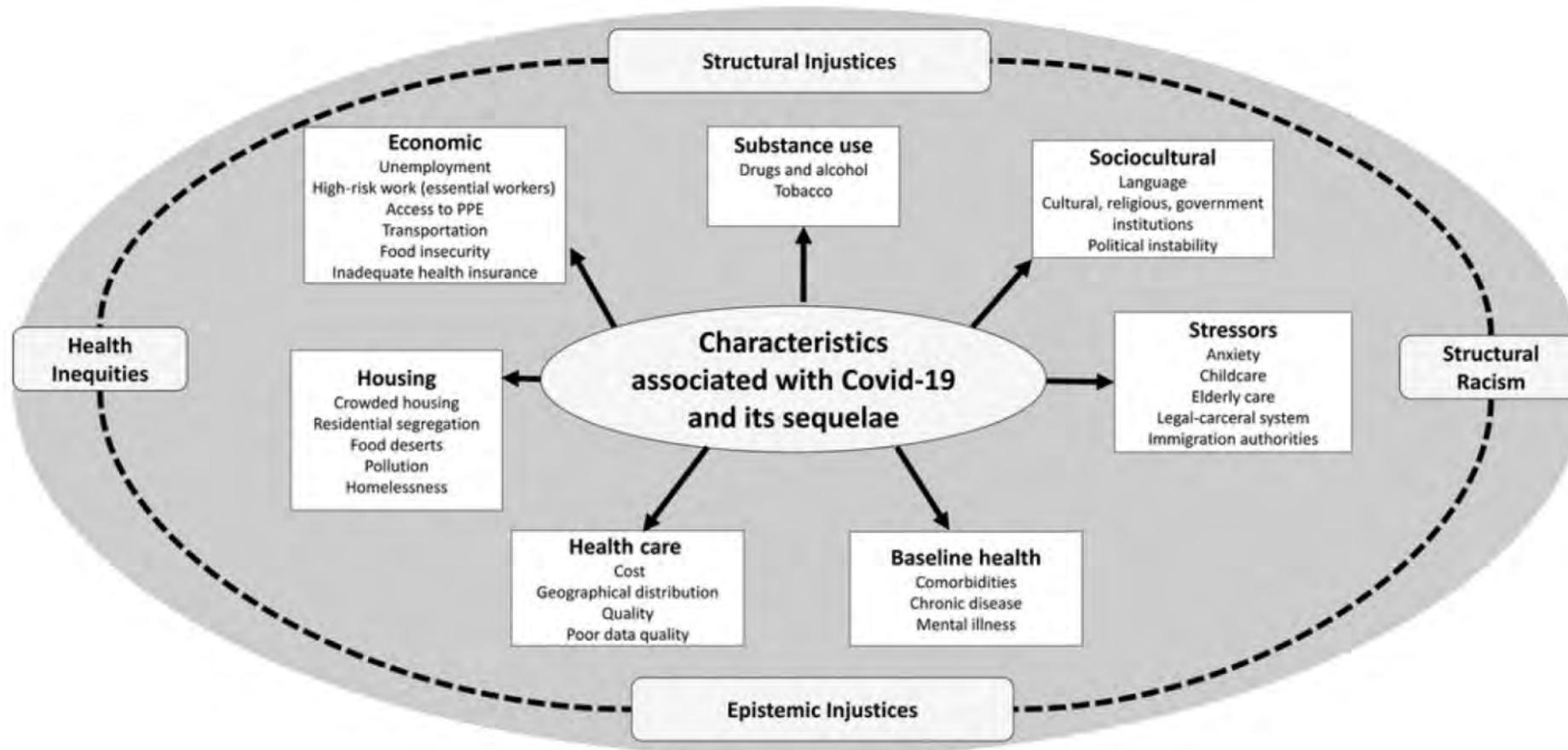
**1,108,512**

**deaths**

have been reported in the U.S.

# Social and Structural Determinants of Health





**FIGURE 6-3** Characteristics associated with COVID-19 and Long COVID.

SOURCE: Republished with permission of John Wiley & Sons, from Berger et al., 2021, p. 523, in Zackary Berger presentation, March 22, 2022.

# “Essential” workers

- Farm workers, Meat, Chicken and Seafood processors, Dairy workers
- Lack of paid sick leave
- Lack of leave for testing and vaccination
- Lack of PPE
- Limited access to testing
- Limitation of housing and transportation



# Enhanced Vulnerabilities

- Cultural and language differences
- Low-wage
- Living in rural areas
- Inherent dangers and health risks of occupation
- Immigration/citizenship status
- Migratory lifestyle
- Lack access to health care, insurance or financial resources
- Lack of regulatory protection
- Crowded Housing
- Transportation



# Covid Impacts Families Through the Body/Mind



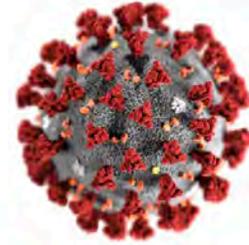


# The Covid Scenario Unfolds

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1. Is the person truly sick and if so with what?
2. Getting a Covid test: Where? PCR, Rapid. Finding them. Waiting for results
3. What to do during the waiting time? Range: 15 mins to 48 hours
4. If positive, can the person isolate? If an adult, decisions: ? go to work, ? Tell employer, isolate, childcare/parental care,
5. If child is positive: how do you isolate a child? Who takes care of the child?

# Families Had to Learn the Difference



## Quarantine vs Isolation

### Quarantine:

- To separate and restrict movement of well persons who may have been exposed
- Monitor to see if they become ill

### Isolation:

- To separate ill persons who have a communicable disease
- Restrict movement

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19



**Persistent cough**



**Shortness of breath**



**Chills**



**Sore throat**



**New loss of taste or smell**



**Fever**  
(Temperature of 100.4 and above)



**Headache**



**Vomiting and diarrhea**



**Muscle pain**

# When Is Sick Too Sick For School

## Send me to school if...



- I am healthy and ready to learn!
- I have no signs and/or symptoms of being sick.

**AND**

- I haven't taken any fever reducing medicine for 24 hours, and I haven't had a fever during that time.

## Keep me at home if...



I have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Persistent cough
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Headache

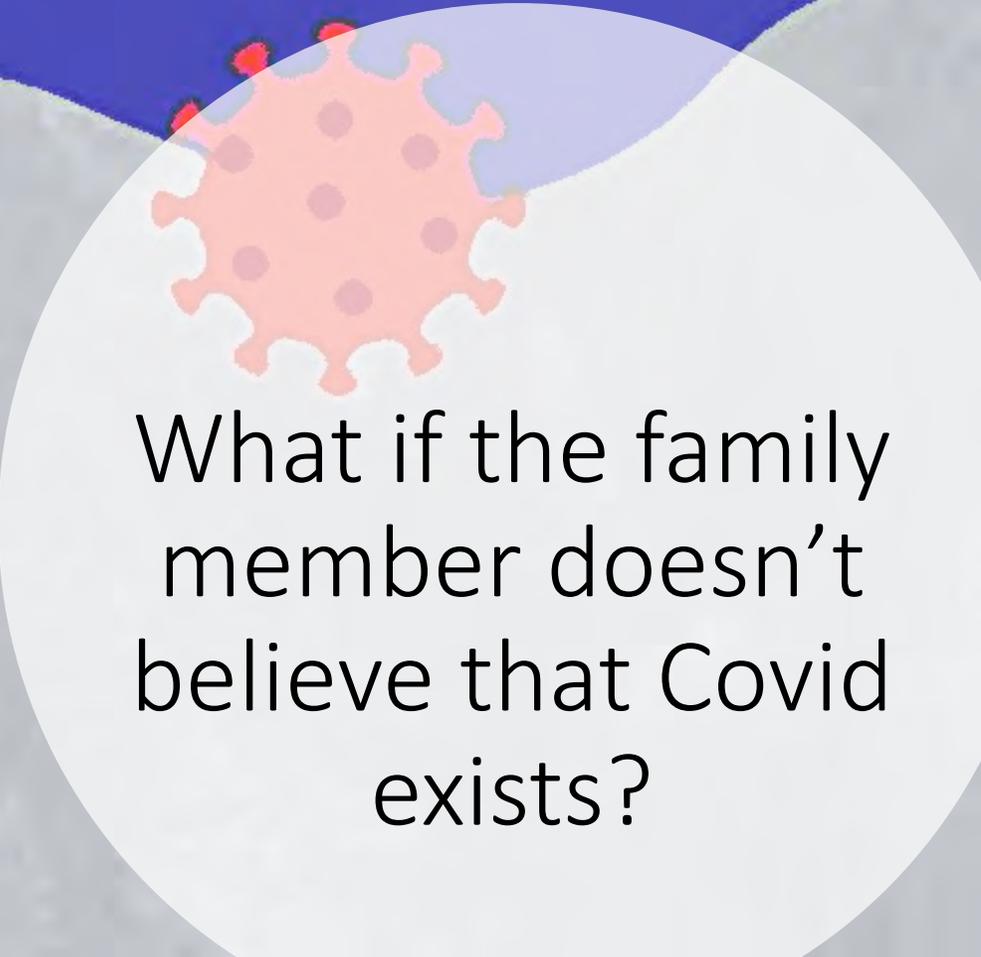
## Call the doctor if...



- I am having trouble breathing
- I have a temperature higher than 100.4 for more than two days
- I've been throwing up or have diarrhea for more than two days
- I've had the sniffles for more than a week, and they aren't getting better.

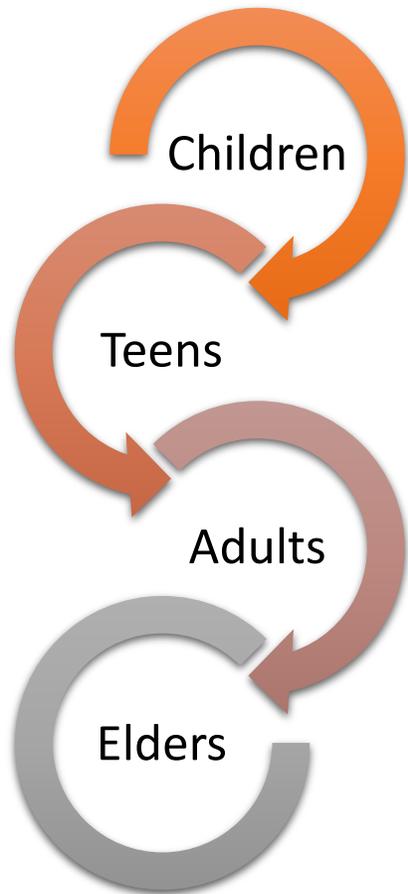
# Scenario Continues...

6. How to quickly learn what to do: monitor for serious illness, treat for comfort
7. When to call PCP, when to go to urgent care, when to go to the ED
8. What if the person has underlying medical issues? Which ones matter?
9. Does the person qualify for a treatment?  
(<https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/covid-19-treatment-drugs>)
10. Steps to get a treatment started within the first 5 days

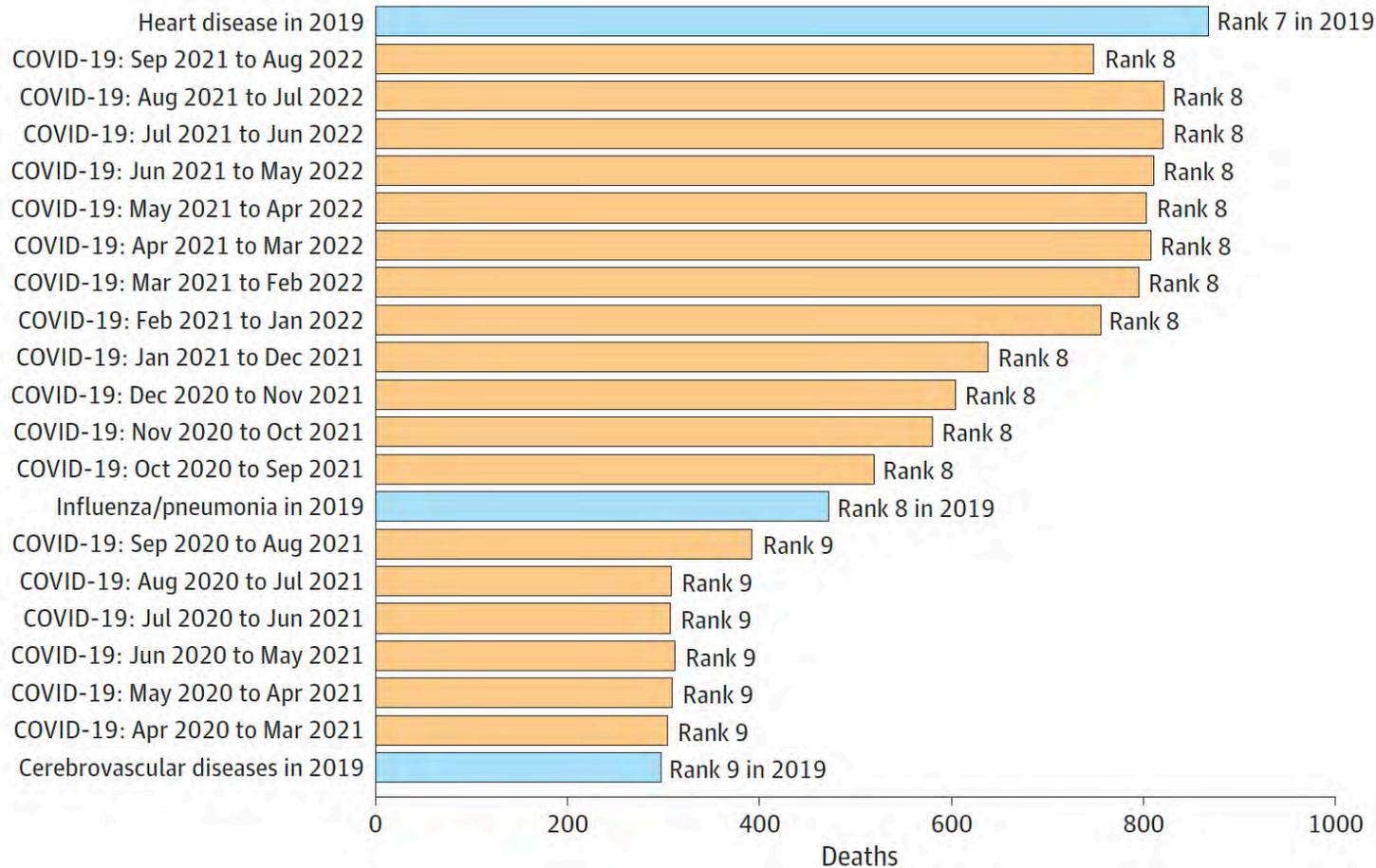


What if the family member doesn't believe that Covid exists?

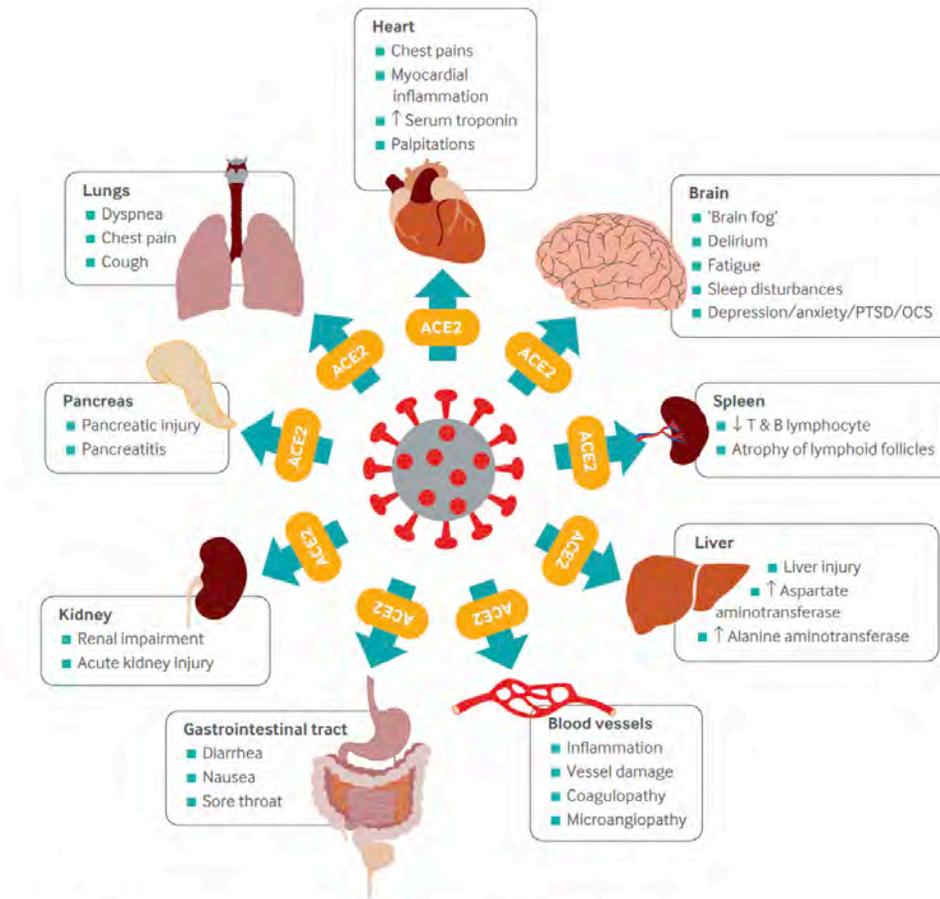
Covid has differential impact depending on which family member gets sick



**Figure 2. Leading Causes of Death in Children and Young People Compared With COVID-19 Deaths in Different 12 Month Periods**



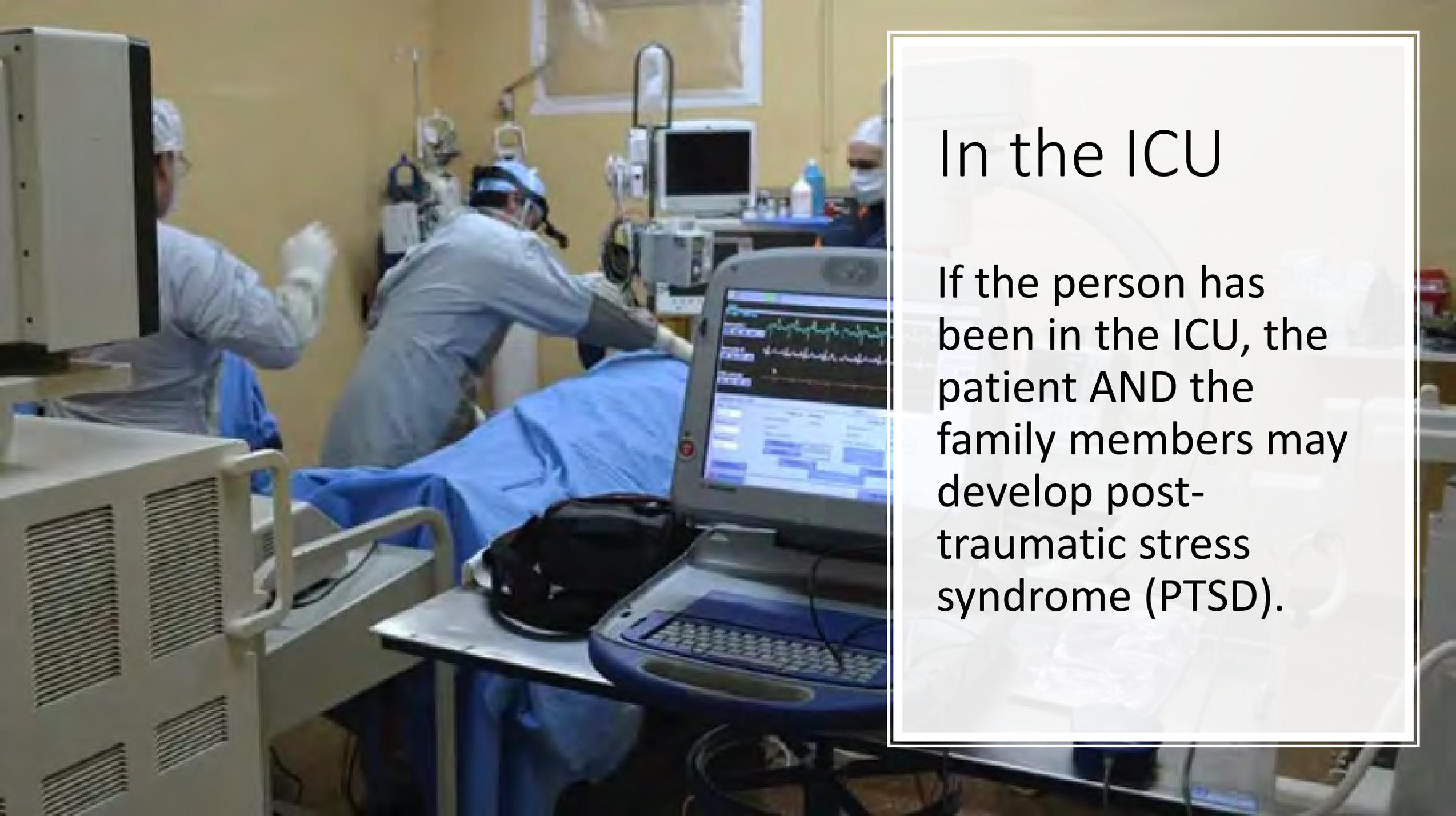
For children and young people aged 0 to 19 years in 2019, leading causes of death included heart disease (ranked seventh), influenza/pneumonia (eighth), and cerebrovascular diseases (ninth). We compare these causes of death to COVID-19 deaths in each 12 month period for which data were available: April 2020 to March 2021, May 2020 to April 2021, and so on. Data for recent months are not yet complete.<sup>14</sup>



**FIGURE 2-2** Body systems affected by SARS-CoV-2 infection.

NOTE: ACE2 = angiotensin-converting enzyme 2; PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder; OCS = obsessive compulsive spectrum disorders.

SOURCE: Reproduced from Crook et al., 2021, p. 2, with permission from BMJ Publishing Group Ltd., in Stuart Katz presentation, March 21, 2022.



## In the ICU

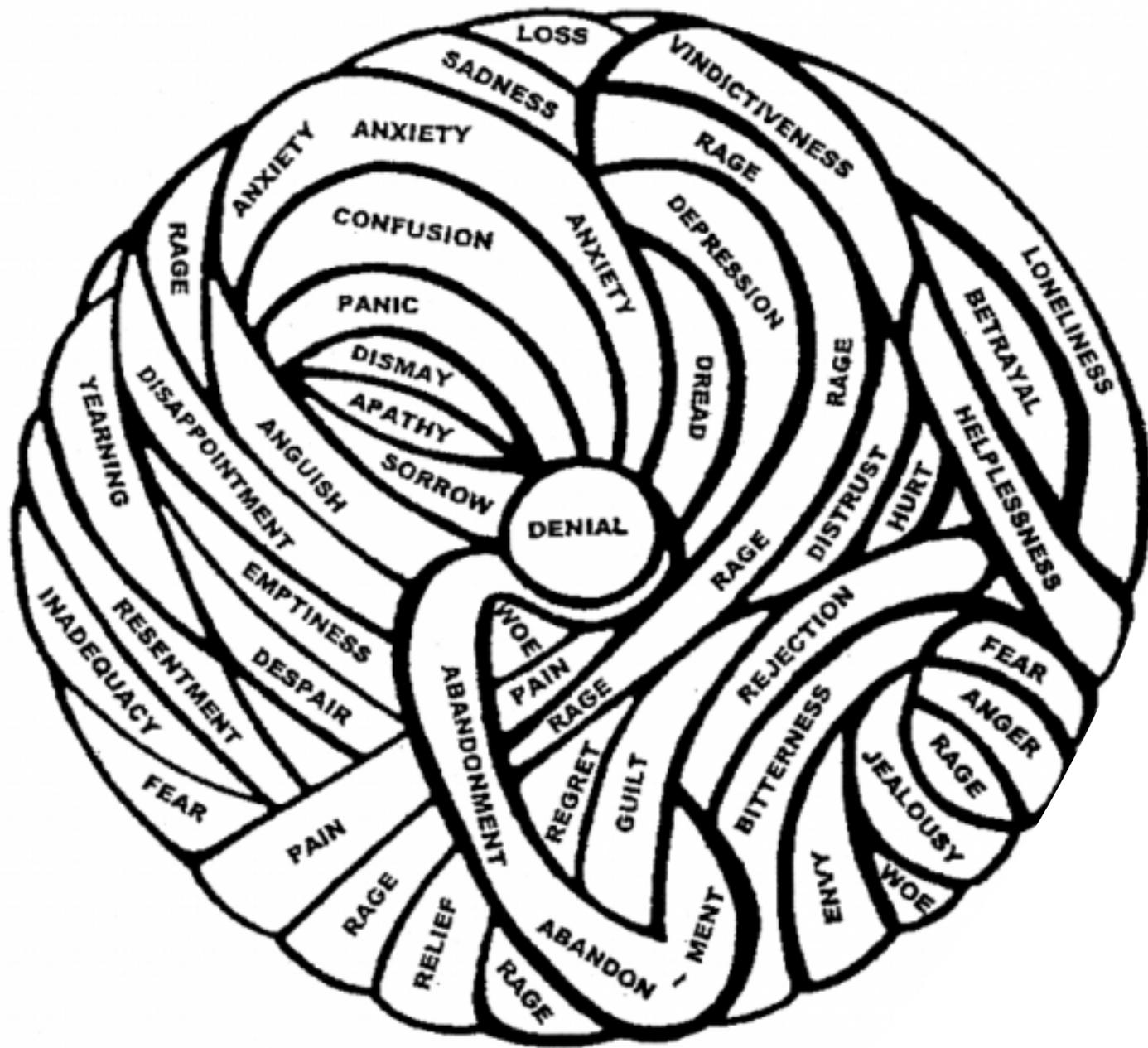
If the person has been in the ICU, the patient AND the family members may develop post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD).

## Social Determinants of COVID-19 Mortality

In rural counties (n=2826), counties with more **non-English speaking households** and more **farm workers** had **significantly higher levels of mortality**, as did counties with higher levels of poverty and more residents over the age of 65.

Fielding-Miller et. al preprint July 2020





# Grief...A tangled "Ball" of Emotions

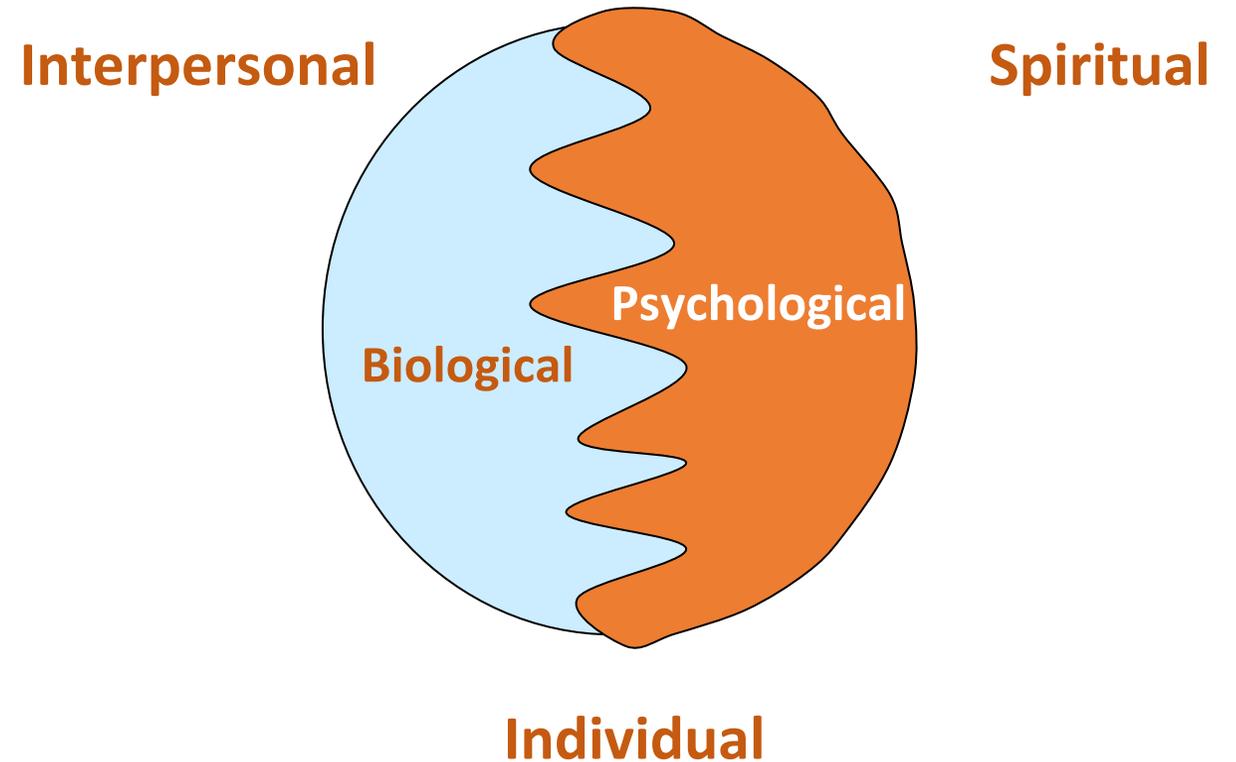
H. Norman Wright

# Living with Grief

There may be disturbances of:

- Sleep
- Appetite
- Energy level
- Mood
- Dreams

Our physical experience affects our psychological experience and vice versa.



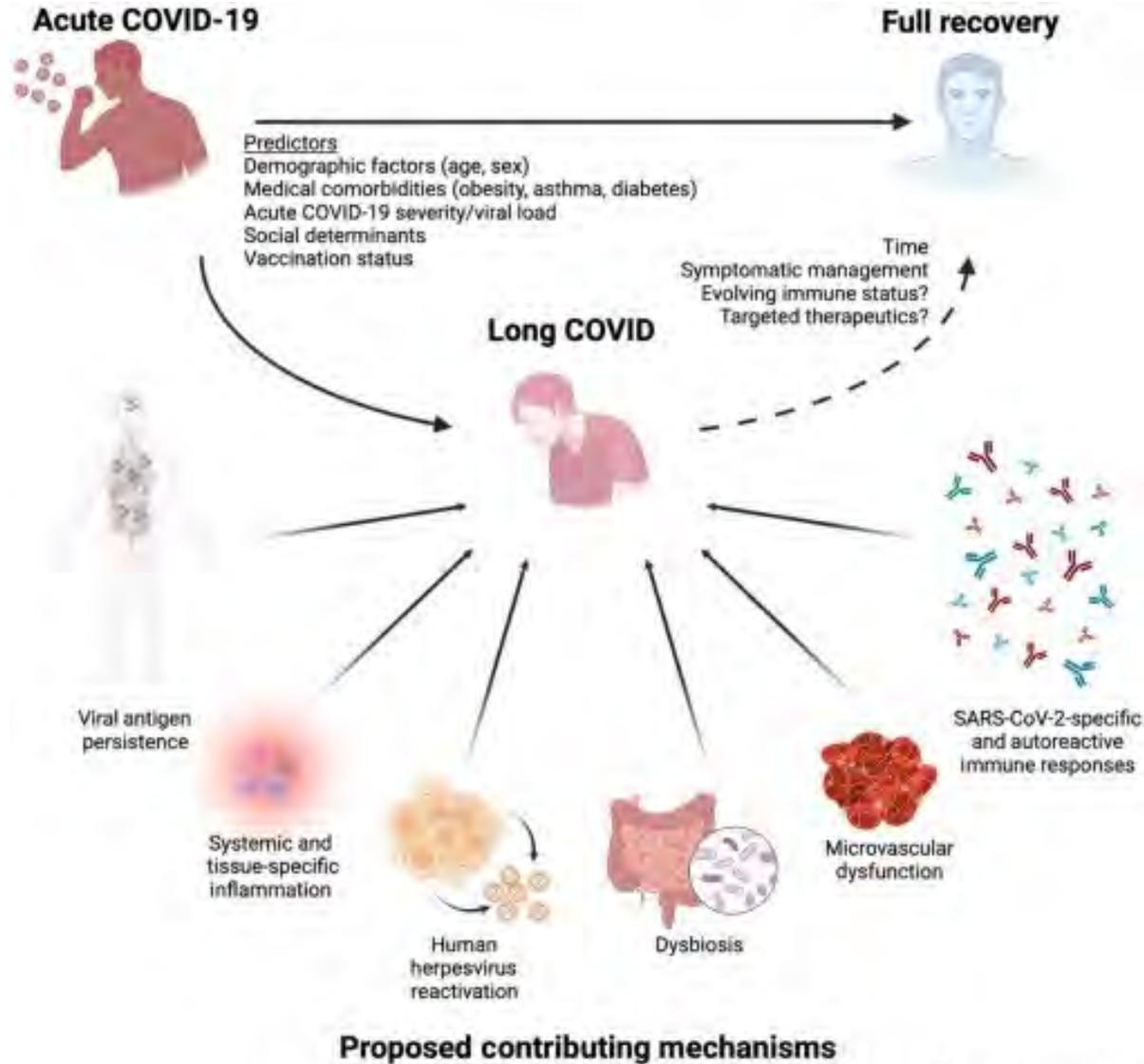
# In the hospital; After the hospital; With Long Covid

I feel terrible! I'm not myself.



You should have; you shouldn't have.

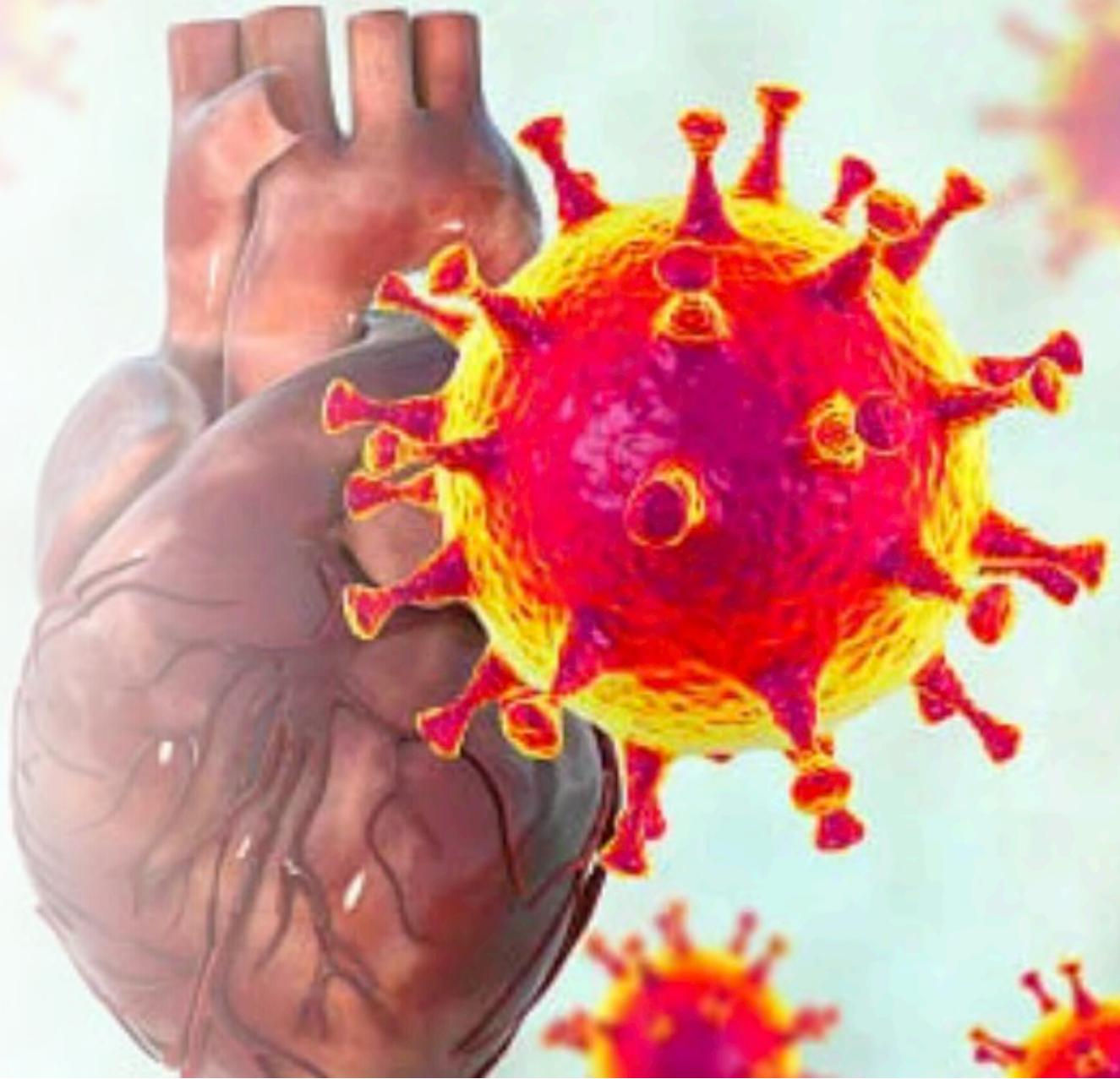




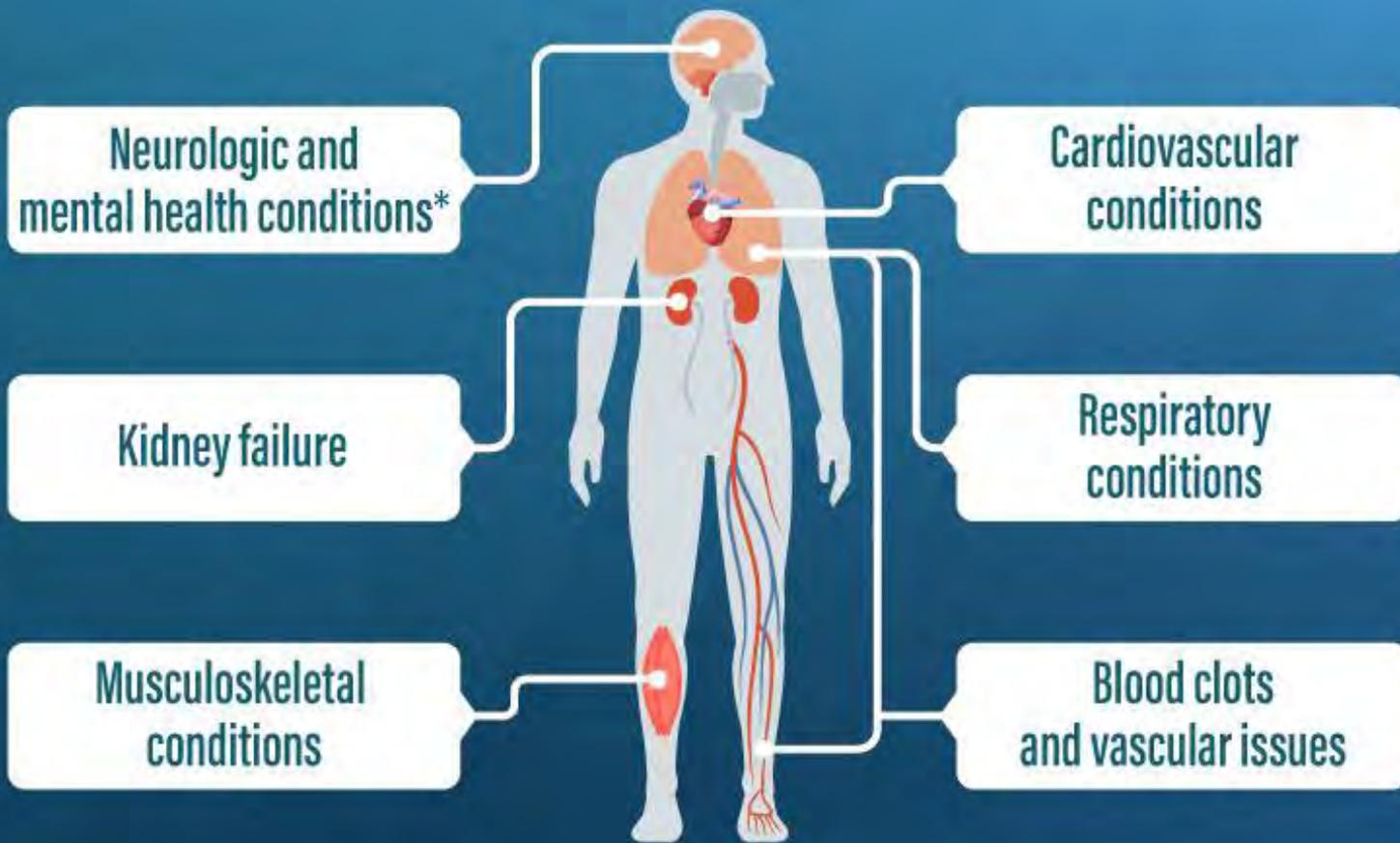
Trends in Immunology

# No list of Long Covid symptoms is the same

- CDC: 19
- Yale: 22
- Mayo: 10
- UK NHS: 16
- University of Missouri: 7
- fast-beating heart, hair loss, fatigue, chest pain, shortness of breath, joint pain and obesity.



Approximately  
**1 in 5 adults**  
ages 18+ have a  
health condition  
that might be related to  
their previous COVID-19  
illness, such as:



**Talk to your health care provider  
if you have symptoms after COVID-19**



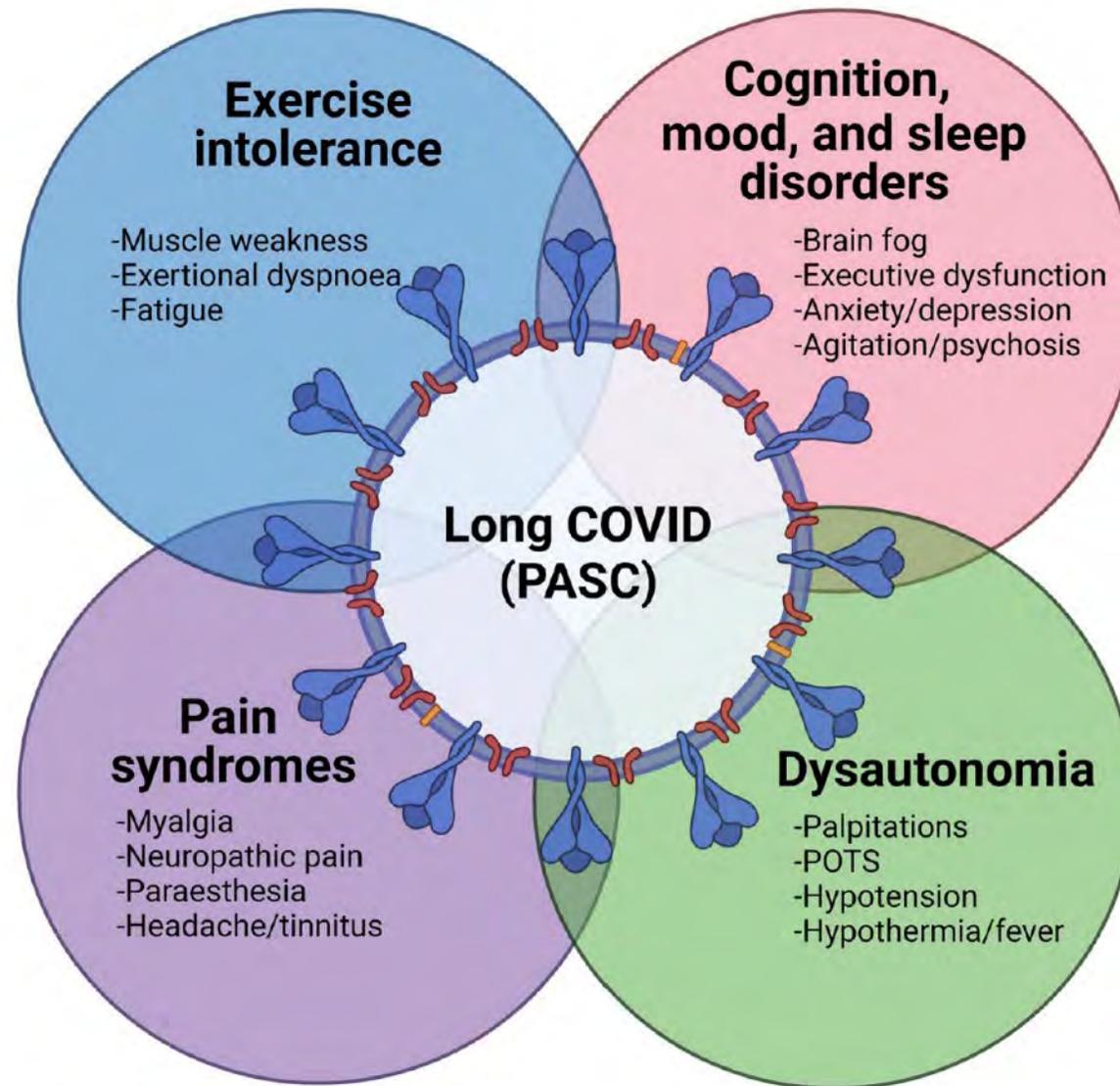
[bit.ly/MMWR7121](https://bit.ly/MMWR7121)

\* Adults aged 65 and older at increased risk

**MMWR**

# Lack of Clarity Contributes to Difficult Adjustment

- No universal definition
- Not many specialized services yet
- Both health care workers and family members may greet a person's symptoms with skepticism or frustration due to no clear definitions and protocols established
- Long wait times for service even if you live near a center

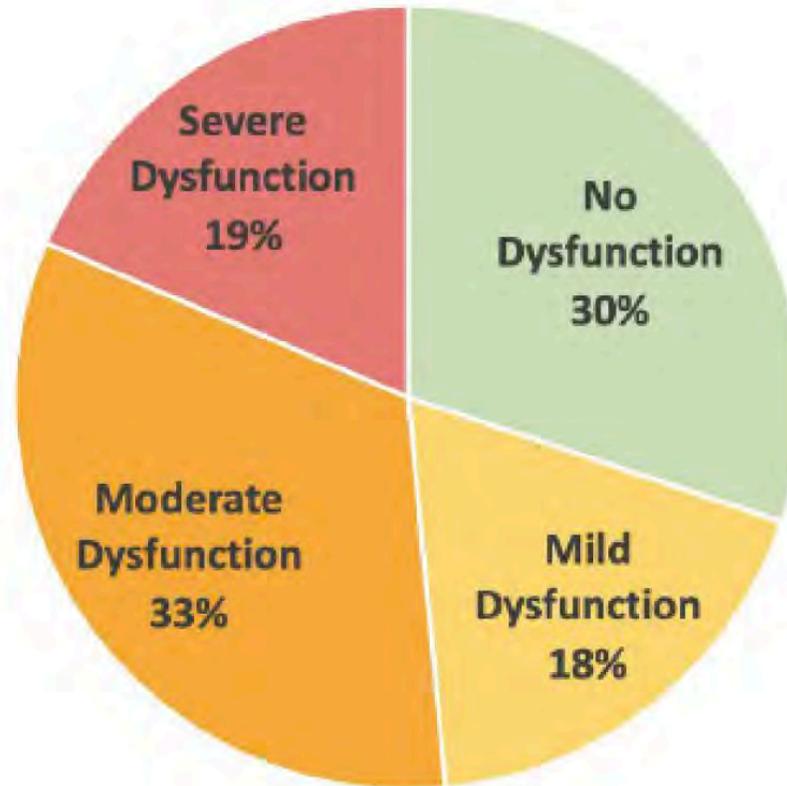


**FIGURE 3-1** Long COVID symptoms.

NOTE: POTS = postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome.

SOURCE: Balcom et al., 2021, p. 3581, in Avi Nath presentation, March 21, 2022.

*LONG-TERM IMPAIRMENTS AND FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS*



**FIGURE 5-2** Neuro QOL Cognitive Function scale scores among patients with post-acute COVID-19 infection.

SOURCE: Laura Tabacof presentation, March 22, 2022; unpublished data from the speaker.

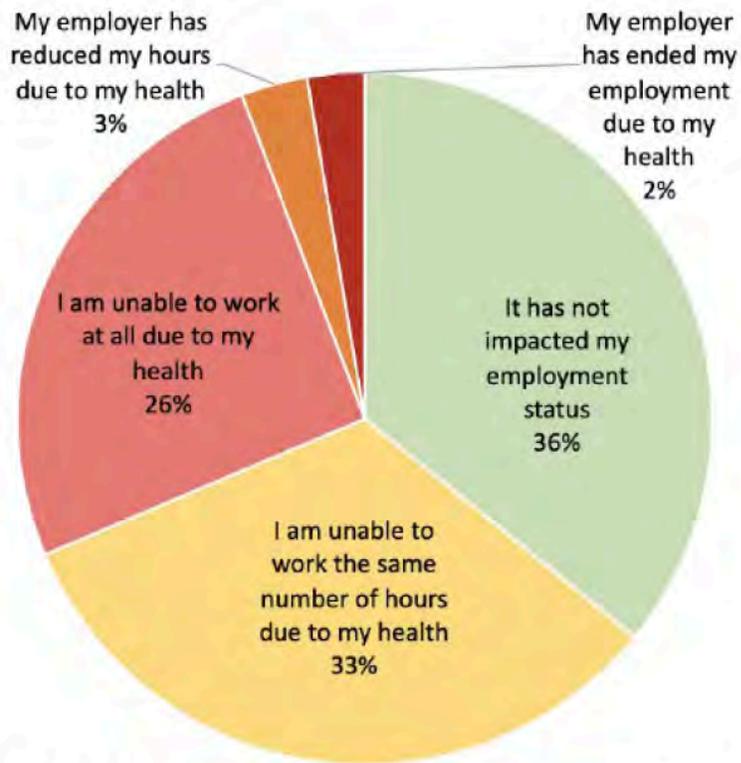
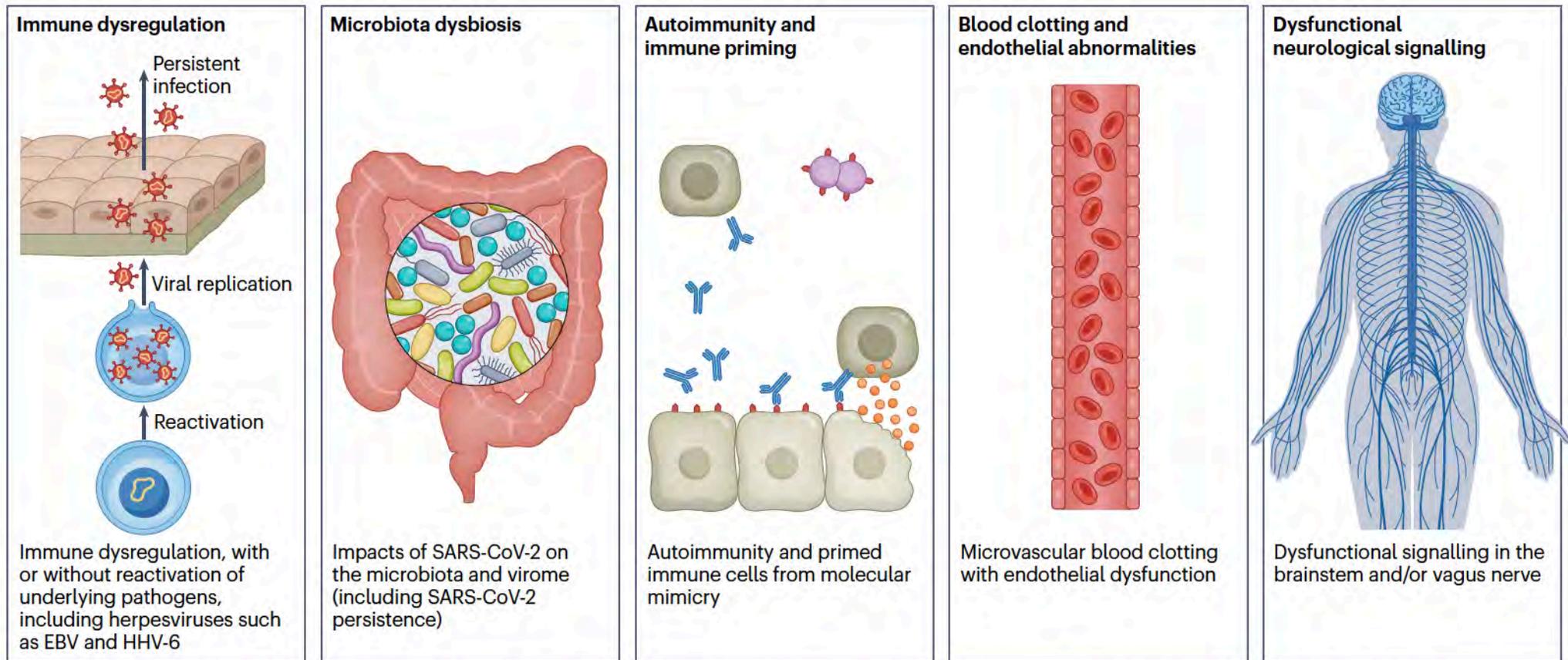


FIGURE 5-4 Employment status among patients with postacute COVID-19 infection.  
 SOURCE: Laura Tabacof presentation, March 22, 2022; unpublished data from the speaker.

- **Employment Status (n = 522)**
- **Disability Insurance (n = 217)**
  - n = 17 applied
  - 50% were approved

2-4 Million Americans are out of the workforce due to Long Covid



**Fig. 3 | Hypothesized mechanisms of long COVID pathogenesis.** There are several hypothesized mechanisms for long COVID pathogenesis, including immune dysregulation, microbiota disruption, autoimmunity, clotting

and endothelial abnormality, and dysfunctional neurological signalling. EBV, Epstein–Barr virus; HHV-6, human herpesvirus 6; SARS-CoV-2, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.



# Mental Health Burden

- Sleep–wake disorders
- Anxiety and fear-related disorders
- Trauma- and stress-related disorders
- Use of non-opioid and opioid analgesic drugs, antidepressant agents, sedatives and anti-anxiety medications.

# Long Covid in Children

- Yes, children can have lingering symptoms
- Symptoms may be headache, dizziness, poor concentration, loss of appetite, hyperactivity, disrupted sleep, disrupted appetite, memory problems, mental and physical exhaustion
- Infants born to women who had Covid during pregnancy were more likely to be diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental delay in the first year after birth

# Patients With Mild COVID-19 at Risk of Some Post-COVID-19 Condition Symptoms

- Patients who were diagnosed with mild COVID-19 were up to 4.6 times more likely than uninfected patients to have some symptoms associated with post-COVID-19 condition (PCC) for 6 to 12 months, according to a [study](#) in *The BMJ*.
- The excess risks for infected patients were highest for altered senses of smell and taste, cognitive impairment, shortness of breath, weakness, and palpitations. Lower but significant excess risk was found for dizziness.
- The risk differences were higher 30 to 180 days after infection than 180 to 360 days after infection, and symptoms subsided among most patients with PPC within a year.
- The study's findings were similar regardless of virus variants, age, and sex.

# A Different Study Found:

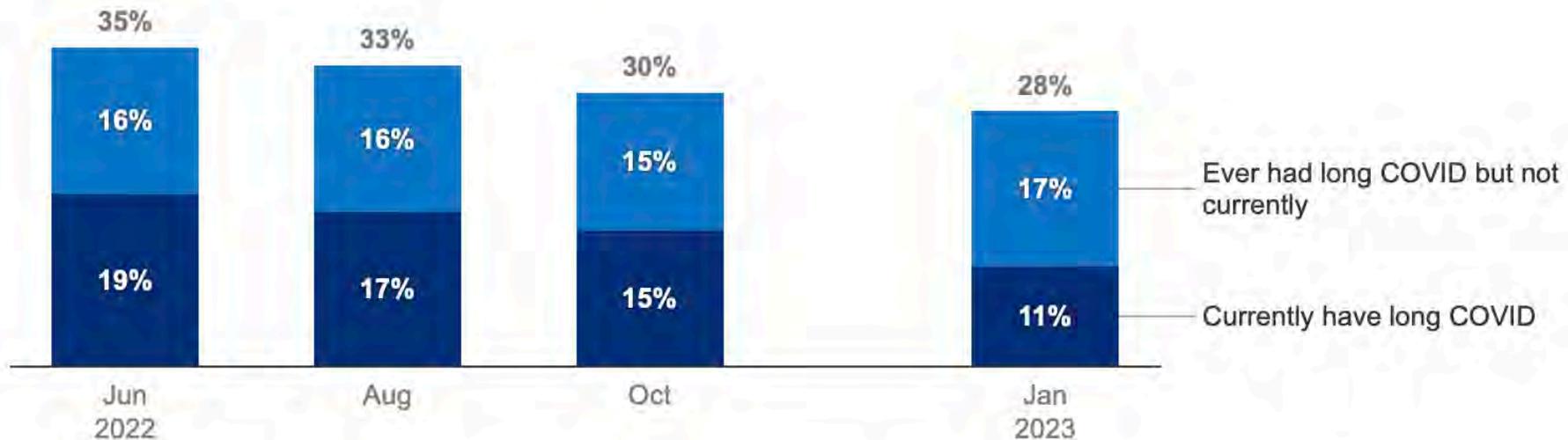
“This nationwide study suggests that patients with mild COVID-19 are at risk for a small number of health outcomes, most of which are resolved within a year from diagnosis,” the authors wrote.



Figure 1

## Among People Who Have Had COVID, the Percentage who Currently Have Long COVID is Declining

Percentage of people reporting that they currently have or ever had long COVID among those who have had COVID as of January 16, 2023



NOTE: The Pulse Survey, an experimental survey conducted by the Census Bureau and National Center for Health Statistics, asked respondents whether they had any symptoms of COVID that had lasted longer than 3 months. This figure reports the findings as of 6/13/2022, 8/8/2022, 10/17/2022, and 1/16/2023.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics. Post-COVID Conditions. Data accessed Jan 26, 2023. Available from: <https://data.cdc.gov/d/gsea-w83j>. • PNG

**KFF**

Figure 2

## Many People with Long COVID Have Activity Limitations but Most are Not Significant

*Percentage of people reporting that they have activity limitations from long COVID as of January 16, 2023*

■ Significant activity limitations ■ Non-significant activity limitations

Of all adults



Of adults who currently have long COVID



NOTE: The Pulse Survey, an experimental survey conducted by the Census Bureau and National Center for Health Statistics, asked respondents who currently reported symptoms of long COVID whether those symptoms reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics. Post-COVID Conditions. Data accessed Jan 26, 2023. Available from: <https://data.cdc.gov/d/gsea-w83j>. • PNG

**KFF**

# RECOVER: Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) created the RECOVER Initiative to learn about the long-term effects of COVID.

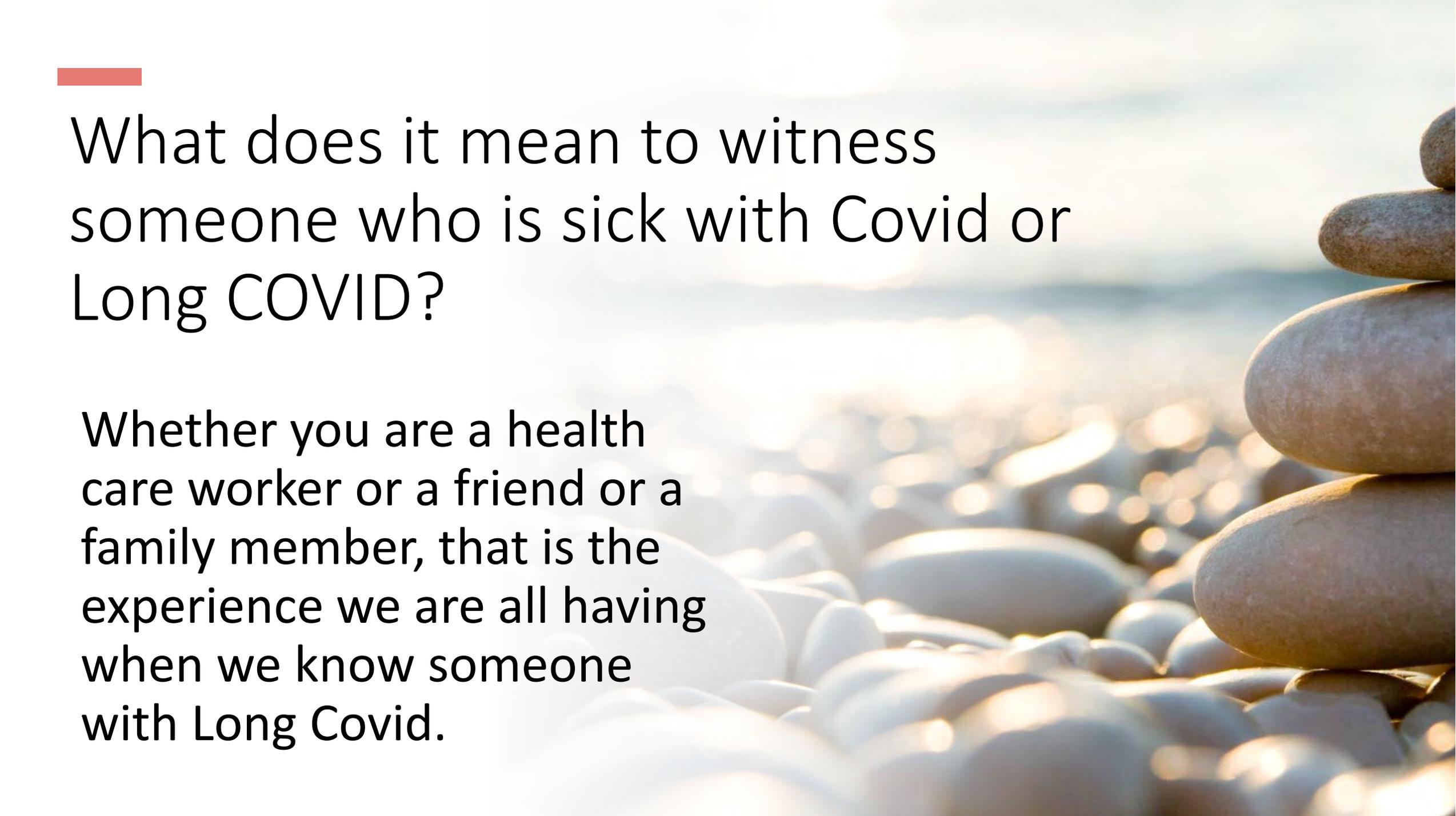
Whether or not you have had COVID, you may be able to participate in RECOVER research.

[FIND AND JOIN A RECOVER STUDY](#)



The goal of RECOVER is to rapidly improve our understanding of and ability to predict, treat, and prevent PASC (post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2), including Long COVID.

[Get more information about Long COVID. →](#)



What does it mean to witness someone who is sick with Covid or Long COVID?

Whether you are a health care worker or a friend or a family member, that is the experience we are all having when we know someone with Long Covid.

# Long Covid Symptoms as They Impact Family Life and Work Life

- ✓ Brain Fog
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Lack of Concentration
- ✓ Executive Functioning Decline
- ✓ Memory
- ✓ Difficulty Breathing
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Anxiety

# Witness Positions

Aware

Unaware

Empowered

Effective  
and  
Competent

Misguided  
Harmful

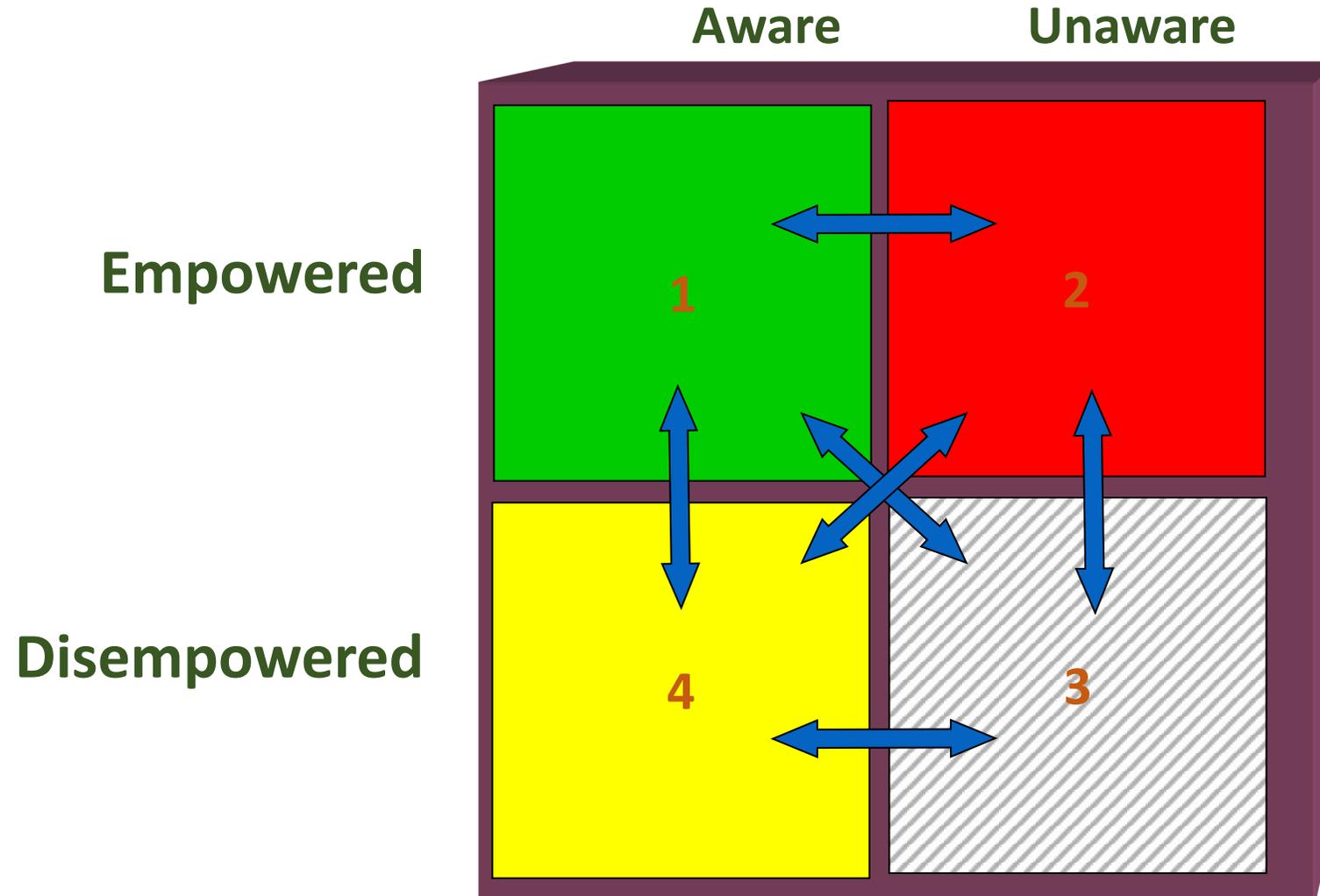
Disempowered

Ineffectual  
Stressed  
Exhausted

Abandoning



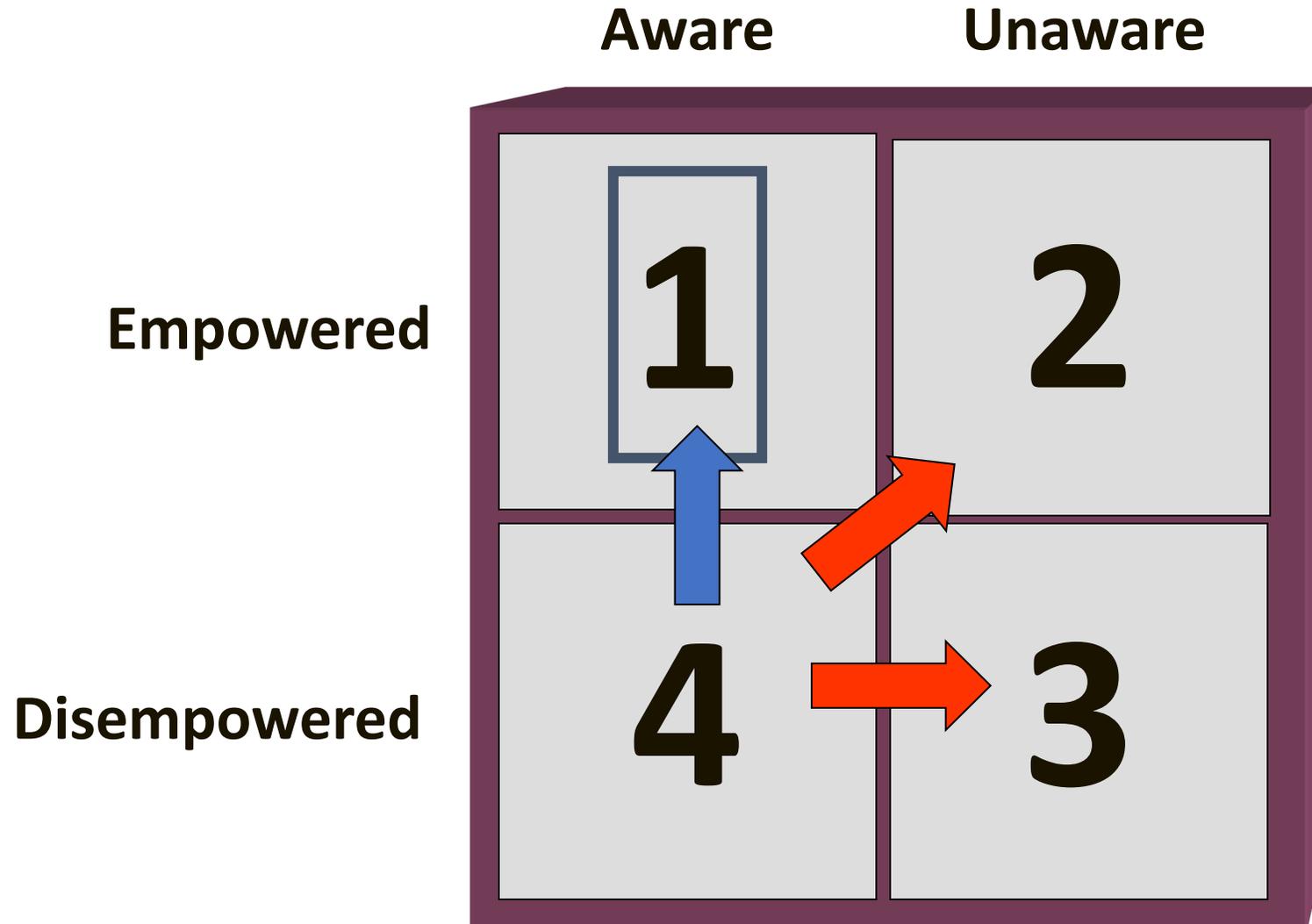
# Changes in Witness Position

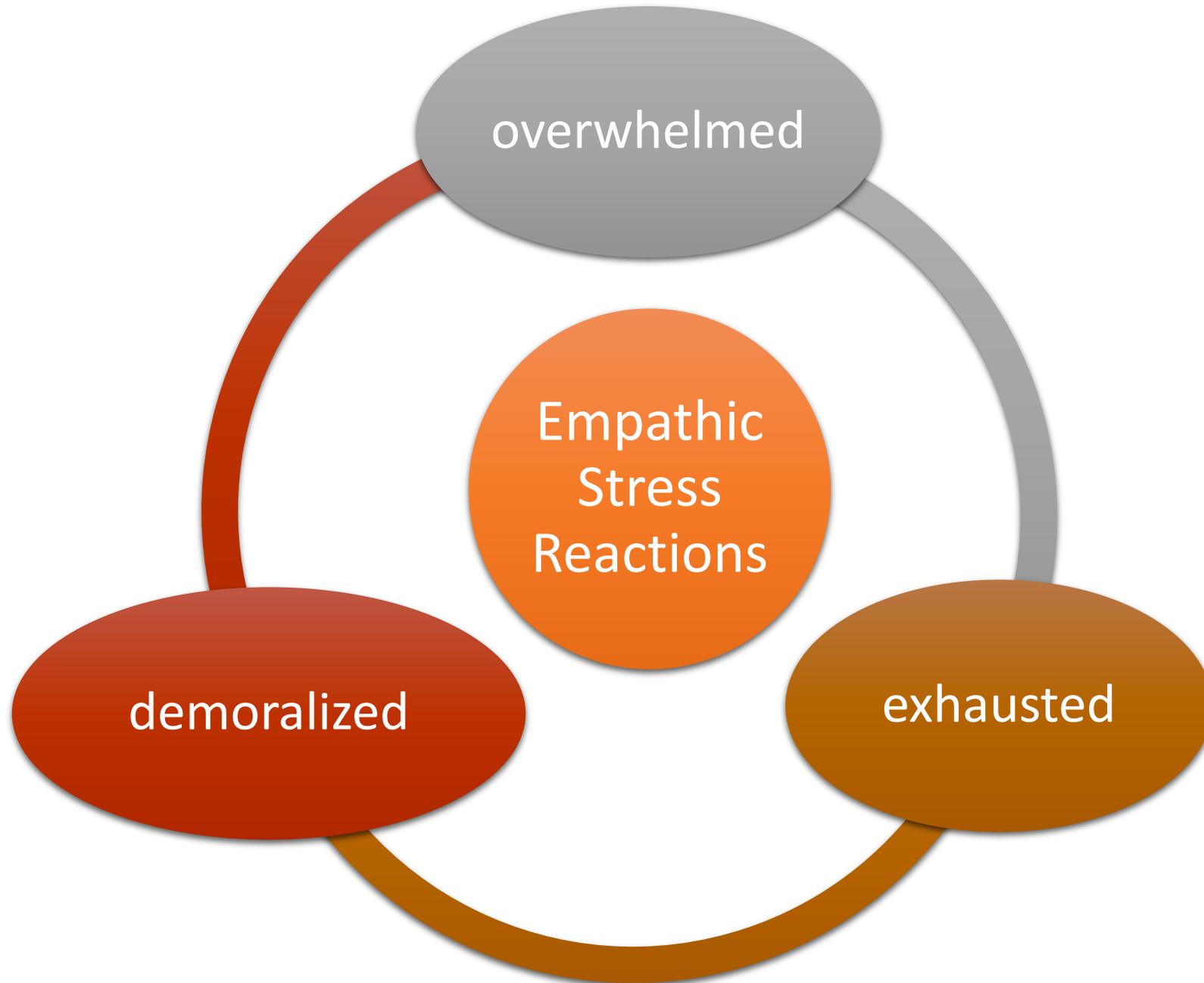


# Witness Positions

|              | Aware  | Unaware   |
|--------------|--|---|
| Empowered    | <b>Mutual Support</b><br><b>Effective Action</b><br><b>Intimacy</b>                                    | <b>Lack of Support</b><br><b>Non-responsiveness</b><br><b>Intrusion</b><br><b>Misguided</b> |
| Disempowered | <b>Fear</b><br><b>Despondency</b><br><b>Helplessness</b><br><b>Loneliness</b><br><b>Demoralization</b> | <b>Denial</b><br><b>Avoidance</b><br><b>Isolation</b><br><b>Numbness</b>                    |

# Options from Position 4





# Self-Loss

People who live with a painful gap between who they have been and who they are now are living with self-loss.



# Ambiguous Loss: The partner's experience

The person is there  
but they are not the  
person they used to  
be.



# Long-Term Questions

Will I be able to earn a living?

Will I be able to care for those who depend on me?



# Difficulty of Getting Medical Care for Long Covid Conditions

This requires a lot of work on the part of the patient or patient's family

Long Covid patients describe "Being a patient is a full-time job; being an advocate is overtime."

Anger, frustration, despair are added to the burdens

# What can the partner do?

Be a good listener

Make it a “we” not a “you” experience. “You are not alone. We are in this together.”

Be an advocate with the health care system

Remember that most people will get better

Encourage all family members to take on a healthy or healthier lifestyle

# What is a Healthy Lifestyle?

- Healthy body mass index
- Never smoking
- High-quality diet
- Moderate alcohol intake
- Regular exercise
- Adequate sleep
- Those with 5 of 6 factors had HALF the risk of Post Covid



# Social Support



Estimate that 1  
in 6 Americans  
have Long Covid,  
about 60 million  
people

**MOST PEOPLE WILL KNOW SOMEONE WITH LONG COVID**



# Social Support

- The more support a person has the better they cope.
- The better a person copes, the more likely they are to receive social support.

# Interface with Healthcare System

**Pre- and Post-Covid**

# Medical Error and Covid

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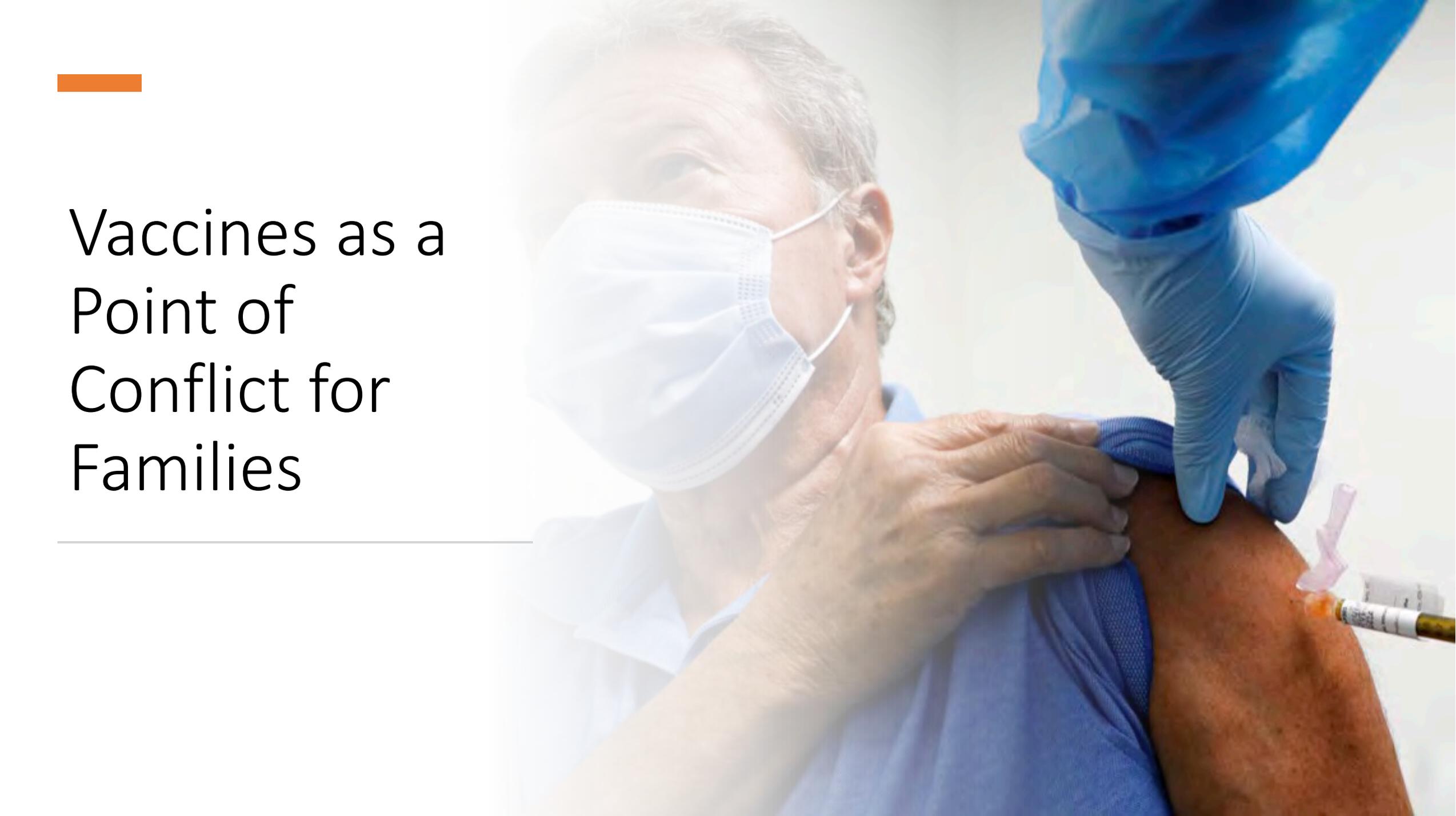
While trying to avoid going into medical facilities due to Covid-19, physicians and patients missed early or earlier detection of a serious illness.

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When finally picked up, the ramifications for families are many, including anger, remorse, regret, guilt.

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Significantly complicates illness course, emotionally and relationally



Vaccines as a  
Point of  
Conflict for  
Families

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# Conflicts around Visiting and Holidays

- Agreements about how to protect vulnerable members.
- Sharing vaccine status
- Cut-offs



# Helpful Practices

Hope as a  
verb...  
something we  
do with  
others



# Evidence Supports Health Protective Value of Spiritual/Religious Community Participation

Large research project reviewing thousands of studies between 2000-2022 found solid evidence for an association between spiritual/religious community participation and improved mental health, lower suicidal ideation, lower substance use and decreased mortality.

However, attention to matters of spirituality in health care should be individualized, patient-centered, and respectful of beliefs and preferences

## For the healthcare worker:

- Recall worst bout of flu you have ever had.
- Let yourself deeply understand the terror of mortality and the experience of pain.
- Practice embodied listening and cultural humility.
- Build resources around empathic distress for you.
- Build resources of self-compassion: some things you cannot know.
- Build up the “muscle” for tolerating grief

## Ideas for Working with Families

- Work with reasonable hope
- Identify their witness position
- Listen for self-loss/other-loss
- Consider trauma
- Encourage accepting support
- Be sturdy in relation to their grief
- Discuss how they feel about their medical team

# Post Session Evaluation

QR CODE

We pay very close attention to your evaluations. Your feedback helps us improve our presentations and guides the development of the material. Please take a few minutes to submit your evaluation.

*NOTE: If you would like to receive a Certificate of Continuing Education or a Certificate of Attendance, submission of the evaluation is required.*

**THANK YOU!**

