

BROADCAST-E-consult innovation helping OSF support COVID-19 long-haulers

Peoria, Illinois-based OSF HealthCare has created an electronic e-consult option to help primary care providers support COVID-19 patients who have lingering symptoms.

After investigating approaches of other large health systems across the country, OSF decided its [COVID Recovery Clinic](#) for so called long-haulers will start at the primary care level. Dr. Mark Meeker, vice president for physician services says it makes sense to have someone to oversee efforts by what might require several specialists.

SOT-Dr. Mark Meeker, vice president of physician services for OSF HealthCare

“This touches so many different organ systems and the severity can be so different and the consequences so different that it’s really best to have your primary care team navigate you through the system. So we have set up a long hauler clinic, so to speak, that’s virtual.” (:18)

SOT-Dr. Mark Meeker, vice president of physician services for OSF HealthCare

Dr. Meeker says e-consults can help people with multiple symptoms.

The consultant can review the record, review the test results, review the symptoms primary care is reporting and give advice on how to address that situation. Or they (the specialist) may see that person virtually and do a virtual consult. Or, if we feel it’s appropriate, we may say, ‘You need to go see doctor X, who is in this specialty to help us manage this.’” (:21)

SOT-Dr. Mark Meeker, vice president of physician services for OSF HealthCare

OSF HealthCare reports the most common symptoms among its patients are fatigue, shortness of breath and cough that lingers, along with muscle, joint, and other body aches. The more serious symptoms among long-haulers are chest pain and brain fog, where they just can’t think clearly. Some also have memory issues and headaches.

SOT-Dr. Mark Meeker, vice president of physician services for OSF HealthCare

Dr. Meeker says blood clots also pose a threat to some long COVID patients.

“We’ve had some young people, for example, with significant blood clot issues that appear to be induced by circulation problems induced by COVID because we had no other explanation for that person to have that problem.” (:15)

SOT-Dr. Mark Meeker, vice president of physician services for OSF HealthCare

Researchers say a third of all COVID-19 patients will have at least one lingering symptoms. According to Dr. Meeker, rehab is a pillar of most treatment approaches for long-haulers.

“Physical rehab, pulmonary rehab, cardiac rehab and now we’re starting to talk about brain rehab, which is really more along the lines of cognitive rehab. How do we get the brain rehabbed to clear up (the brain fog) and to be able to think more clearly? Those are all emerging issues that our therapists are working on.” (:21)

The uncertainty and the roller coaster of sometimes fleeting and reoccurring symptoms some long haulers experience can also take a psychological toll. Our next story will take a closer look at the mental health of people experiencing long-haul COVID symptoms.

*For website story

If you are recovering from COVID-19, make sure to find a [primary care provider](#) if you don’t already have one. That can be the first step to getting the proper support you might need to manage ongoing symptoms.