

Broadcast- Many COVID-19 Long-haulers experience Mental Health issues

[New research](#) has found that nearly one person in five diagnosed with COVID-19 also suffers with a psychiatric disorder such as anxiety, depression or insomnia within three months.

Dr. Sam Sears, director of physician services for OSF Behavioral Health, says so called long haulers – patients who experience symptoms six weeks after their diagnosis – face anxiety over the uncertainty.

SOT-Dr. Sam Sears, OSF Behavioral Health

“When are my symptoms going to get better? When am I going to feel a certain way? When? When? When?” And ultimately, many of these things there aren’t concrete answers of ‘You’re going to have difficulties for this amount of time,’ because again, while we’ve learned an awful lot about COVID-19 over the last year-plus, we don’t know everything yet.” (:24)

Dr. Sears points out people with long COVID who experience so-called brain fog face a long road to recovery based on what is known from working with patients who’ve suffered a concussion, stroke or other traumatic brain injury.

SOT-Dr. Sam Sears, OSF Behavioral Health

“We do know that things that have direct neurologic impact take much longer to heal than other body systems, which tend to heal at a much faster rate than neurologic issues.” (:13)

Some symptoms, such as a loss of smell and taste, can also be depressing and some people report feeling upset over loved ones who don’t understand or believe their symptoms are real. The advice for loved ones of long haulers – just be supportive.

SOT-Dr. Sam Sears, OSF Behavioral Health

“While you may not understand the experience they’re having, being there to support and listen can be incredibly helpful to the individual.

And just because you don't understand what they're going through doesn't mean your support can't mean the world to them." (:18)

OSF is managing long haulers through their primary care provider but with an option to use an e-consult feature in the patient's medical record to have a specialist review records and past medical history to determine if someone could benefit from therapy and possibly other treatment such as medication. If necessary, the individual can be offered an evaluation and counseling either in-person or by video visit.