

perceived lack of scientific knowledge and educational material on Long Covid, similar diagnostic criteria were noted. Across Europe, uniform evidence-based guidelines, scientific support and training for GPs must be a priority to empower GPs in their Long Covid approach.

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General practitioners' knowledge, perception and experience on Long Covid: a cross-sectional study in Belgium and Malta

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Background:

Over 10% of Covid-19 infected people experience persistent symptoms (Long Covid). As most Long Covid cases are in patients with a mild acute Covid-19 infection, primary health care and general practitioners (GPs) are at the forefront in their care. This study investigated GPs' knowledge, perception and experience on Long Covid at cross-country level.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study targeting GPs was conducted in Belgium and Malta during mid-2022. An online survey on Long Covid was disseminated. Descriptive and logistic regression analyses were performed.

Results:

The survey was completed by 150 GPs (105 for Belgium, 45 for Malta). In both countries, most GPs reported insufficient scientific knowledge and information on Long Covid diagnosis and treatment. Accessibility to educational material was limited and an awareness-rising campaign was seen as merited, especially by Maltese GPs (OR = 6.81, 95%CI [1.49;31.12]). For diagnosing Long Covid, 54.7% reported the requirement of a positive Covid-19 test, more among Belgian than Maltese GPs (64.3% vs 45.2%, $p = 0.036$). To assess Long Covid, GPs applied diagnostic criteria by themselves (47.3%) in combination with persistent symptoms. 76.0% GPs reported caring for Long Covid patients, irrespective of practice type and GPs' country, sex or age ($p = 0.353$; $p = 0.241$; $p = 0.194$; $p = 0.058$). Although most GPs (94.7%, $p = 0.291$) stated that Long Covid patients should follow multidisciplinary approach, only 29.8% of them reported to care for these patients by multidisciplinary cooperation and 48.3% by themselves/GP colleagues.

Conclusions:

GPs frequently provide care to Long Covid patients and GPs' care showed similarities at cross-country level. Although GPs