

Hospitals plan to meet urgent need for post COVID-19 rehabilitation

2 November 2020, by Tim Sullivan



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As more people survive COVID-19 hospitalization, the need for rehabilitation may become increasingly important, according to a new study by Harvard Medical School researchers published in *PM&R*.

The study details the results of a collaboration between clinicians and researchers at [rehabilitation hospitals](#) in Boston and New York, detailing the steps they took to develop rehabilitation plans for patients recovering from severe COVID-19. The collaboration began in May 2020 as both cities were recording among the highest per capita cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.

The researchers were based at Harvard Medical School-affiliated Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

"When we saw the high numbers of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in Boston, we realized there would be an important role for rehabilitation medicine to play," said Hannah Steere, lead co-author of the study. Steere is an HMS instructor in

physical medicine and rehabilitation at Spaulding.

Steere said that her team at Spaulding worked with colleagues in New York City, including co-authors Farah Hameed and Alfred Gellhorn, to put together a novel program to meet this urgent need. The study grew out of that collaboration, she said.

During the early part of the pandemic, the teams were able to develop a clinical program to evaluate and treat patients with ongoing rehabilitation needs following hospitalization for COVID-19. To date, 106 and 92 patients have been seen at New York City and Boston sites, respectively.

The team acknowledges the need for further research to identify the long-term effects in this population and to assess the benefit of rehabilitation interventions.

"We are finding that many people that experienced a severe COVID-19 infection leave the hospital and continue to face persistent symptoms that include physical, cognitive and psychological issues," said Ginger Polich, lead co-author of the study and HMS instructor in physical medicine and rehabilitation at Spaulding. "Our hope is that a COVID recovery clinic focusing on the [physical medicine](#) and rehabilitation needs of this population would help these survivors in their recovery."

More information: Hannah K. Steere et al. Ambulatory Rehabilitation of Patients Hospitalized with SARS CoV ?2 Infections: Early Pandemic Experience in New York City and Boston, *PM&R* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/pmrj.12506](https://doi.org/10.1002/pmrj.12506)

Provided by Harvard Medical School

APA citation: Hospitals plan to meet urgent need for post COVID-19 rehabilitation (2020, November 2) retrieved 12 June 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-11-hospitals-urgent-covid-.html>

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