

COVID-19 pneumonia increases dementia risk

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University of Missouri Health Care COVID-19 progressive care unit. Credit: Justin Kelley/MU Health Care

A new study from the from the University of Missouri School of Medicine and MU Health Care shows patients hospitalized with

COVID-19 pneumonia have a higher risk of developing dementia than those with other types of pneumonia.

A team of MU researchers pulled Cerner Real World Data from 1.4 billion medical encounters prior to July 31, 2021. They selected patients hospitalized with pneumonia for more than 24 hours. Among 10,403 patients with COVID-19 pneumonia, 312 (3%) developed new onset dementia after recovering, compared to 263 (2.5%) of the 10,403 patients with other types of pneumonia diagnosed with dementia.

"The risk of new onset dementia was more common in COVID-19 pneumonia patients over the age of 70 in our study," said lead researcher Adnan I. Qureshi, MD, a professor of clinical neurology at the MU School of Medicine. "The type of dementia seen in survivors of COVID-19 infection mainly affects memory, ability to perform everyday tasks and self-regulation. Language and awareness of time and location remained relatively preserved."

The median time interval between infection and dementia diagnosis was 182 days for COVID-19 patients. The study only included new onset dementia associated with hospital admission during a short follow-up period. Qureshi said further study over longer periods of time would provide a more complete picture and may help to determine the underlying reasons why COVID-19 [pneumonia](#) might increase [dementia](#) risk.

"The findings suggest a role for screening for cognitive deficits among COVID-19 survivors," Qureshi said. "If there is evidence of impairment during screening and if the patient continues to report cognitive symptoms, a referral for comprehensive assessment may be necessary."

In addition to Qureshi, the study authors include fellow MU School of Medicine collaborators S. Hasan Naqvi, MD, associate professor of

clinical medicine; William Baskett, graduate student; Wei Huang, graduate student; and Chi-Ren Shyu, Ph.D., director, MO Informatics Institute.

Their study, "New Onset Dementia Among Survivors of Pneumonia Associated with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 Infection," was recently published in the journal *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*.

More information: Adnan I Qureshi et al, New-Onset Dementia Among Survivors of Pneumonia Associated With Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 Infection, *Open Forum Infectious Diseases* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/ofid/ofac115](https://doi.org/10.1093/ofid/ofac115)

Provided by University of Missouri

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