



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Health systems, medical products and innovation
Performance of national health systems

Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health

Drafting group on Facing the impact of post-Covid-19 condition on health systems

(Virtual meeting)

13 May 2022

Minutes

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda was approved without changes. The minutes of the previous meeting of 4 April were adopted and will be published on the [Expert Panel website](#).

2. Nature of the meeting

The fourth drafting group meeting on ‘Facing the impact of post-COVID-19 condition on health systems’ took place on 13 May 2022 via MS Teams. The meeting, which was chaired by Dr Dionne Kringos, Chair of the drafting group, was a non-public meeting.

No declarations of interest that could in any way interfere with the topic discussed were submitted by any member.

3. List of points discussed

Feedback/comments on the draft opinion

The chair of the drafting group opened the meeting and asked for any updates from COM and ECDC. ECDC confirmed that it will share the preliminary report of a systematic review on post-COVID-19 condition when available. COM (RTD) informed participants that the Work Program 2023-2024 is under preparation and any specific recommendation in the opinion related to research would be welcome.

Rapporteurs gave an update on the ongoing work of this opinion. Members reviewed the available definitions of the post-COVID-19 condition, and agreed that clear criteria must be established for health professionals to diagnose patients with post-COVID-19 condition. They stressed the need for training of health professionals to deal with uncertainties and lack of scientific evidence. Members pointed at other conditions with similar symptoms, e.g. chronic fatigue. The importance of inter-professional teams was also highlighted.

The next part of the meeting was dedicated to brainstorming on elements of health systems where post-COVID-19 condition might have an impact. For example, elements where potential health system re-design is needed as well as elements that can serve as levers to achieve system change.

Regarding **impact**, the main issues raised were related to quality of life and measurement. Scaling the loss of quality of life has limitations as this condition is relapsing and fluctuating. Apart from impact on individual mental and functional capabilities, the post-COVID-19 condition has impacts on organisations, public health services and their delivery, on health workforce as well as on the general wellbeing of society.

When discussing **re-design**, it was deemed essential to refine the definition of the condition based on known pathophysiology/pathology mechanisms. Putting quality research into practice and policies, risk stratification and adapting care delivery to the diverse and fluctuating needs of these patients were also underlined.

Members emphasised the need to update organisations with information on the evolving scientific knowledge. The need for increased accountability to patients with post-COVID-19 condition through enhanced linkage between health, social and community care and cross sectoral collaboration was discussed. Other important elements mentioned in the discussion included monitoring and response, timely adaptation in response to changing definitions and evidence to inform treatment and prevention. Healthcare teams should be redesigned towards goal oriented, person-centred care. Communication and the mobilisation of society for health and disease prevention were also vital.

Discussing potential **levers**, members highlighted the role of basic research to define the condition for diagnosis, and related diagnostic procedures and treatment. They emphasised the need to increase the capacity of the health systems for swift transfer of research results into practice and policies. They commented that health systems must be more responsive to stressors, and appropriate structures to improve preparedness must be put in place.

Members voiced their views on the importance of public communication on uncertainties and lack of scientific evidence related to the post-COVID-19 condition.

Members agreed that some recommendations related to the post-COVID-19 condition might apply to other conditions as well.

4. Conclusion

Members agreed to provide their contribution for specific sub-chapters of a draft opinion by 29 May and to have an updated draft prior to the next meeting of the drafting group on 13 June. The Chair thanked everyone for their active participation and for the valuable discussion.

5. Next meeting

The next meeting of the drafting group is scheduled for 13 June 2022 via MS Teams.

6. List of participants

EXPH members: Professor Jan De Maeseneer, Dr Dionne Kringos, Professor Lasse Lehtonen, Professor Christos Lionis (apologies), Professor Martin McKee, Professor Sabina Nuti,

Professor Pedro Pita Barros, Dr Heather-Lynn Rogers, Professor Katarzyna Wieczorowska-Tobis, Dr Sergej Zacharov (apologies), Dr Jelka Zaletel

Invited external expert Dr Nisreen Alwan

Representatives from the European Commission (DG SANTE: B1, DG RTD)

Representatives from ECDC