Developing an e-learning package to support physiotherapy management of people with Long COVID

Background

Long COVID is defined by the signs and symptoms that develop usually 3 months after an acute infection consistent with COVID-19, with symptoms lasting at least 2 months and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis.

It is important for physiotherapists to understand how to best assess and treat patients who have Long COVID, but there are limited clinical training programs available.

Aims

1. Identify clinical education needs of physiotherapist clinicians and students relating to the assessment and management of Long COVID.

2. Develop an e-learning package, informed by the education needs identified, to support optimal physiotherapy management of patients presenting with impairments associated with Long COVID.

Methods

DESIGN
Australian physiotherapy clinicians and students provided responses to a 10 minute online survey. Data included respondents' experience and confidence to assess and manage patients with Long COVID, and related previous training and education needs.
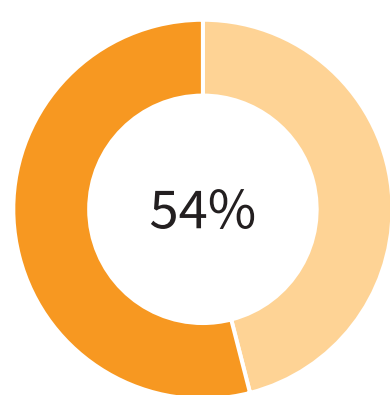
DELIVERY
The survey was distributed from June to December 2022 via: Australian Physiotherapy Association e-newsletter, Winter Breakfast Event (Long COVID focused), Physiotherapy clinical educator and manager networks across the Victorian health sector.
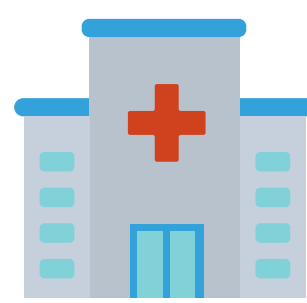
Results

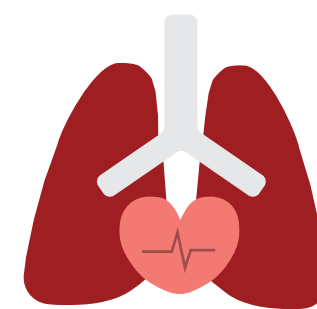### Physiotherapy experience and area of practice of 104 respondents
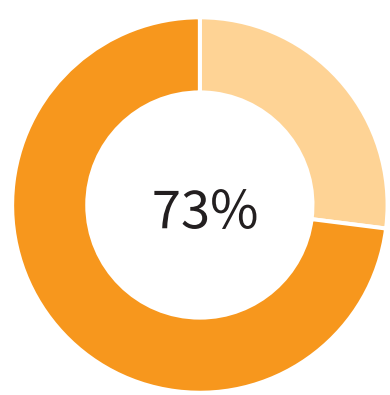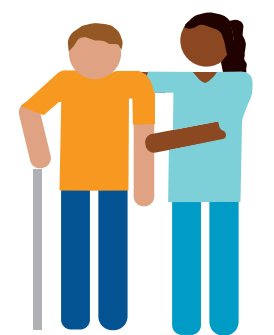

- 73% > 5 years since qualified
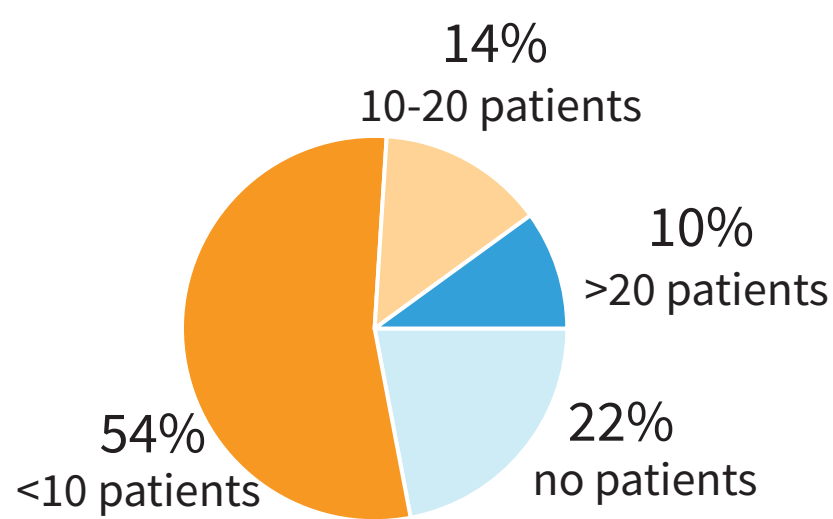- 54% Postgraduate qualifications
- 73% Work in public hospitals
- 20% Cardiorespiratory
- 18% Rehabilitation

Experience managing patients with Long COVID

14% 10-20 patients
10% >20 patients
22% no patients
54% <10 patients

Number of patients with Long COVID treated

55% Confident
29% Not confident
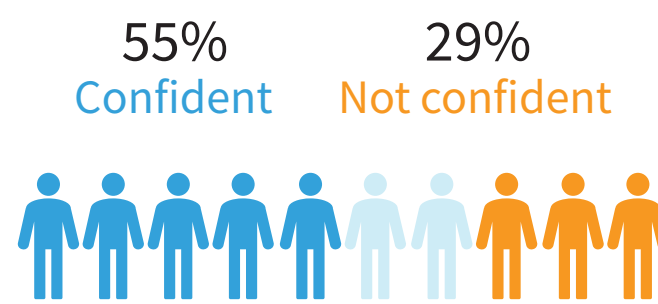
Clinical confidence to perform physiotherapy assessment for patients with Long COVID
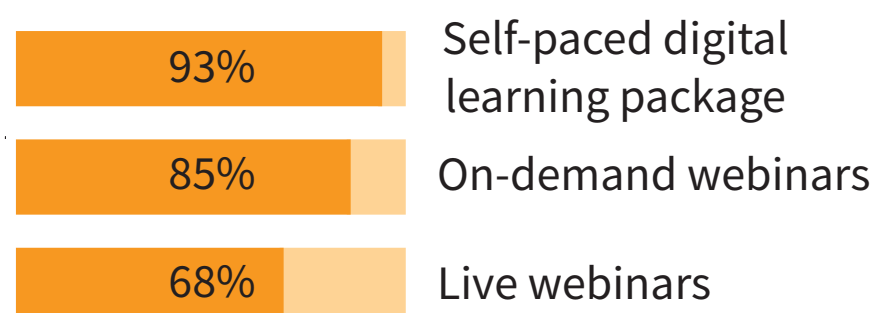
18% +6h
45% None
37% 1-5h
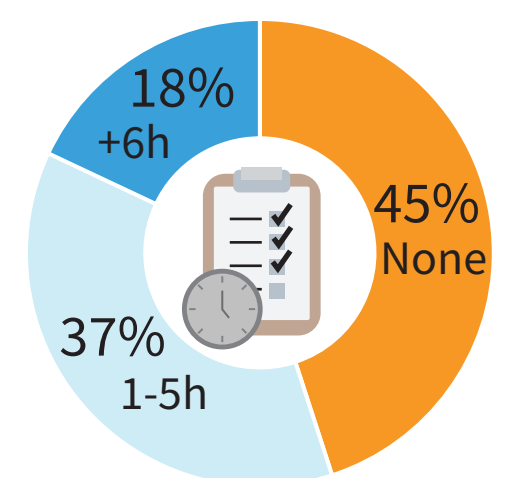
Long COVID professional development training

E-learning package to support management of Long COVID
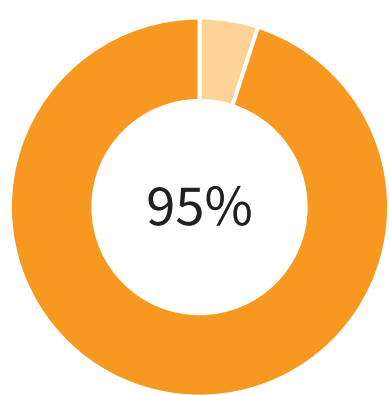
95% **Supported the need for a learning resource**

- 93% Self-paced digital learning package
- 85% On-demand webinars
- 68% Live webinars

Preferences for delivery of the learning package

Suggested topics for inclusion

- Identifying patients with Long COVID who may benefit from physiotherapy management.
- Physical assessment of patients with Long COVID.
- Helping patients manage Long COVID symptoms.
- Exercise-based rehabilitation for Long COVID.
- Self-management for Long COVID.
- Evaluating physiotherapy treatment outcomes for Long COVID.
- Specific assessment tools for Long COVID.

Next steps

Survey results have informed the content of an e-learning package: "Improving the Participation Gap: Physiotherapy for people experiencing Long-COVID." This forms a chapter in an open ended Long-COVID educational resource: "Enabling and optimising recovery from COVID-19: A handbook for health professionals and other caregivers of people with Long-COVID". The book, including the e-learning package is freely available and can be accessed here or via the QR code.

Authors and Affiliations

This work was undertaken by a collaborative team from St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, Monash Health, Western Health, Alfred Health and The Florey Institute. Project Team: Rita Kinsella, Prof Anne Holland, Dr Danielle Hitch, Kate Woodhead, Mark Tran, Janet Bondarenko, A/Prof Kimberly Haines, Dr Karen Borschmann.