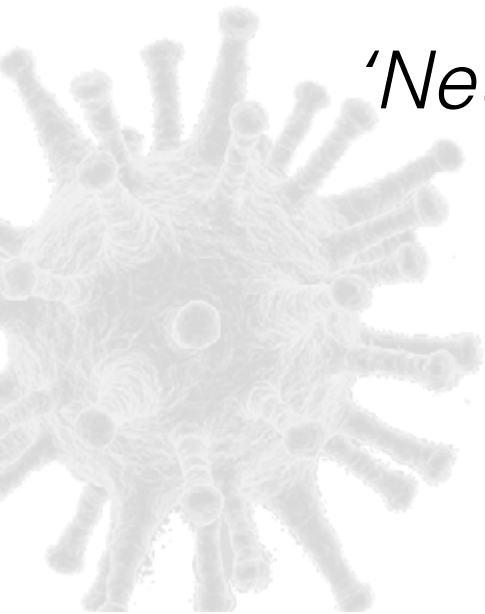


Long Covid Nurse Group Meeting

SUMMARY

'Neurobic Exercises and Long Covid'

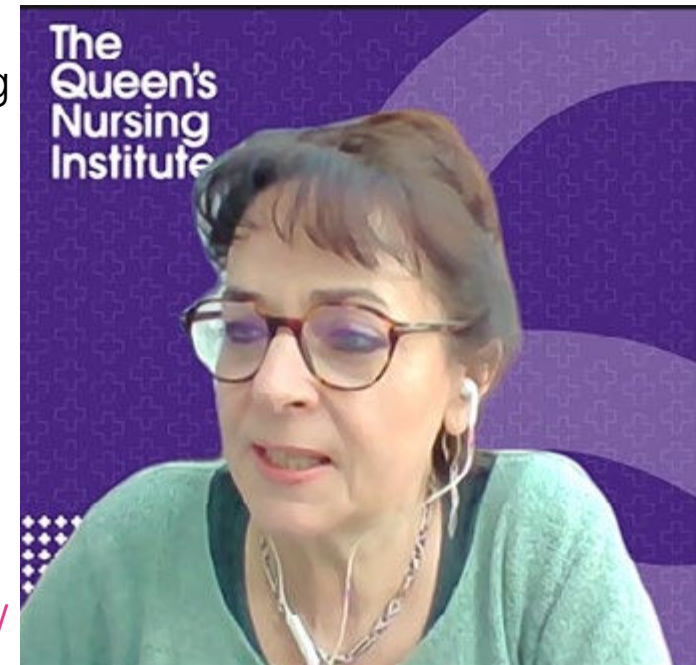
Tuesday 21 February 2023
10am - 11.30am, via Zoom



1. Welcome and Introductions

Helen Donovan, QN, Long Covid Programme Lead, The QNI, @HelenDon_RN

- Welcome everybody to this meeting. I'm delighted to have joined the Long Covid Nurse Group, my background is varied and all community-based. I am a Queen's Nurse and very proud of that and now work as an independent nurse consultant. My area of expertise is vaccinations and immunisations. Hopefully you will agree that Long Covid is a public health issue.
- The Long Covid Nurse Group (LCNG) is a community of practice for nurses in the community to improve care and increase understanding about the physical, mental and emotional effects of Long Covid.
- It was created in 2021 commissioned by NHS England and offers an online network of nursing colleagues; bimonthly meetings with expert speakers; regular newsletters; dedicated pages on the QNI website; Long Covid resources.
- Contact me at helen.donovan@qni.org.uk
- To find out more or join the network, go to: <https://qni.org.uk/nursing-in-the-community/long-covid-nurse-group/>



2. Neurobic Exercises and Long Covid

Gareth Rowlands, Battle Dementia, @CombatDementia

- Neurobic exercises are very simple and quite unusual exercises which are designed to stimulate the brain to combat memory loss.
- I'm a mathematician who writes books on maths in the UK and abroad but I also campaign for people with different forms of memory loss. I regularly visit care homes, nursing homes, villages halls and other venues to set up workshops to give people the opportunity to do these exercises. They are fun to attempt but challenge the brain and increase memory retention and in turn help prevent memory loss by strengthening neurons and creating new memory pathways.
- The brain as you know is the most complex organ in the human body. It produces our every thought, action, memory, feeling and experiences of the world and this jelly-like mass of tissue, weighting about 1.4kgs retains nearly 100 billion nerve cells or neurons.
- If you don't stimulate your brain, it will grow lethargic: if you don't use it, you will lose it.



2. Neurobic Exercises and Long Covid cont.

- The two structures I will mention are the hippocampus, located behind our ears, in the skull. I remember mentioning this to a lady in a nursing home and she said, “Now I know why my head feels so heavy: I have two hippopotamuses in my head!”
- There is nothing the brain likes more than being surprised in a completely different way. The brain enjoys a daily workout and neurobic exercises not only challenge the brain but also enhance one’s quality of life. For good results you should aim to do them daily for 10 - 15 minutes. Other benefits include less stress, positive moods, increased motivation and faster thinking.
- Exercise 1: using two identical water bottles, unscrew the lids with your non-dominant hand and empty the empty one into the full one (best completed over a sink).
- Exercise 2: spread your toothpaste onto your toothbrush and brush your teeth with your non-dominant hand. Or eat breakfast with your non-dominant hand.
- Exercise 4: using your senses: we have sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. Get a bag and include all kinds of objects: fruit and vegetables for example and then with your non-dominant hand, without looking into the bag, pick up things and identify them from touch alone.



2. Neurobic Exercises and Long Covid cont.

- As you know certain fruit and veg can be similar in size and/or texture so this is challenging for your brain.
- You could get someone else to fill a bag with surprising things, for example, my wife has filled this bag with things, let's see what I can find. Orange peel! Cotton wool ball! Face mask!
- When I go to care homes, I try these exercises with residents and they find it fun. Getting it right or wrong doesn't matter, whilst they're doing the exercises, they're challenging their brains and keeping their brains active.
- Exercise 5: uses British coins. Take all 8 coins in a bag, and without looking and using your non-dominant hand, try and figure out which is which based on the edges / sides (the mathematician in me wants to point out one is a septagon one is a dodecagon!)
- Exercise 6: living upside down: stimulate the brain by looking at things upside down, for example your watch, put it on the opposite wrist, upside down. Read the newspaper upside down.
- You can find all these exercises and more on my website including a booklet I made with AgeUK: <http://www.battledementia.co.uk/>



3. Information catch up and supervision

Helen Donovan, QN, Long Covid Programme Lead, The QNI, @HelenDon_RN

- Thank you very much to Gareth for those fantastic exercises.
- As one of the delegates in this meeting has also said, it's also important to not over exercise the brain, as rest is key. Like a broken leg, we must rest and heal before rehab and challenge. Some great infographics on LCNMUK website by Professor Louise Cummings have been shared about cognitive communication - these can be accessed here: <https://teamlcnmuk.wixsite.com/lcnmuk/resources>
- Some vital questions asked during the breakout groups included, what is the biggest challenge for you and your team at the moment?

- **Comments from delegates:**

'Our staff are very tired, those with Long Covid have different symptoms. My symptoms are brain fog, tinnitus and vertigo. I feel like I might fall over at any time. I've been to Long Covid support groups, but exhaustion isn't listed as a long term condition.'

'I went back to work too early and had a massive relapse 3 years later. My symptoms include a hernia because of coughing, Diabetes, I tend to talk back to front. A huge problem is with carers; I now have carers who come to my home from a care agency and they don't have a clue about Long Covid. They need to have training.'

3. Information catch up and supervision cont.

'Some days when the carers come in, I'm OK, but the next day I might be exhausted and unable to get out of bed. As an ill person it's exhausting having to explain this to them. They need this training.'

'The people who tend to get referred are those that can navigate the system. What about those with Learning Disabilities? They're left behind. BAME is also not being represented. These people are not coming through.'

'Breathlessness used to be a symptom, but it's not anymore. 70% of referrals are now about fatigue yet chronic fatigue is not a recognised symptom. Services were set up with a respiratory focus, we're seeing cognitive function being impaired though and things haven't caught up.'

'People are coming in too late. Not at the beginning of their symptoms. The last couple of patients referred, they'd either already lost their jobs due to their Long Covid symptoms or they were on reduced hours. Yet there's a huge lack of guidance, is it permanent disability for example?'

'If you've lived it, you're in a better place to care for people. We need to raise professional standards and awareness. It's about commissioning. It's a postcode lottery about how you get support for your Long Covid. '

3. Information catch up and supervision cont.

- Please note the QNI's grant to support nurses affected by Covid / Long Covid (those still not back to working usual shifts for example), the QNI can help. For more information and to apply, visit: : <https://qni.org.uk/support-for-nurses/financial-help/covid19-grant/> If you have questions about the grant, you can email justine.curtis@qni.org.uk
- Please do remember the QNI's listening service, TalkToUs, which offers emotional support by phone to registered nurses working in the community. If you would like to find out more about the free service or to book your confidential call, please go to: <https://qni.org.uk/support-for-nurses/talktous/>
- To book your place on the next meeting, please go to <https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/long-covid-nurse-group-meeting/>

Future meeting dates:

- 31st March 2023, 1.00 – 2.30 pm
- *25th May 2023, 12.30 – 2.00 pm*
- 18th July 2023, 2.00 – 3.30 pm
- *22nd September 2023, 10.00 – 11.30 am*
- 23rd November 2023, 1.00 – 2.30 pm



Thank you to all delegates who attended today's meeting.

FEEDBACK:

Thank you so much for the presentation. Very interesting and enjoyable and very well presented. Thank you again Gareth.

Thank you I will definitely be trying out and sharing

Great meeting - thank you.

Thank you Gareth - this was very interesting and my notes along with the link to your website and resources will most definitely assist me in my role in Occ Health.

Excellent meeting thank you

Thank you all

Thank you for an excellent meeting