

---

## POSTER ABSTRACT

# Exploring Stakeholders' Experiences with COVID Rehabilitation: A Qualitative Study

1st North American Conference on Integrated Care, Toronto, 4 - 7 October 2021

Marina Wasilewski<sup>1</sup>, Larry Robinson, Sander Hitzig, Christine Sheppard, Amanda Mayo, Jacqueline Minezes, Maria Lung, Robert Simpson

1: Sunnybrook Research Institute, Canada

---

### ***Introduction***

Introduction: Rehabilitation is a key component of the care pathway and a pivotal aspect of the post-acute COVID-19 (COVID) response. Rehabilitation facilitates recovery and community reintegration by improving COVID patients' functional capacity and providing psychosocial supports. However, the COVID care pathway is complicated by a lack of clarity around eligibility for rehabilitation; accelerated care transitions; variability in rehabilitation facility preparedness; and physical distancing restrictions. Presently, there is little evidence (especially from Canada) on how these challenges have been met in practice and what the experiences of providers, patients, and families have been.

### ***Aims Objectives Theory or Methods***

Objectives: To broadly explore patients', family caregivers', and care providers' experiences and needs across the COVID care pathway, and their experiences with inpatient COVID rehabilitation specifically.

Methods: We used a qualitative descriptive approach to gain in-depth insight into stakeholders' (i.e. HCPs, patients, and families) experiences and conducted a thematic analysis of data.

### ***Highlights or Results or Key Findings***

Findings: In total, we interviewed N=11 care providers, N=10 patients, and N=5 family caregivers. Three overarching themes were identified:

(1) Physical and social isolation are challenging for all stakeholders: Patients felt isolated and families felt disconnected from their loved ones. This put added pressure on providers to support patients and liaise between them and their families;

(2) Compassionate care is of primary importance throughout the COVID care pathway: 'Humanizing' both patients and providers was described as important. Patients and families felt interpersonal and emotional care were key features of COVID rehabilitation;

(3) Continuity of care requires improvement: Participants described a need for greater continuity of clinical information, communication, and relationships across settings.

Cross-cutting themes: Preventing spread of COVID underpinned several themes (e.g. required physical isolation and ban on family visits) and social, economic and social factors influenced the nuances of the themes (e.g. cultural sensitivity enhanced compassionate care).

### ***Conclusions***

Conclusions: Our study highlights the important role rehabilitation plays in supporting COVID patients' physical and psychosocial recovery. Better system navigation and support would improve continuity across the COVID care pathway. Enhancing family-patient interaction in the context of infection prevention and control would further optimize the rehabilitation experience.

### ***Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations***

Our findings can potentially be transferred to other COVID rehabilitation populations—including patients, family caregivers, and care providers. Our findings point to individual-, organization-, and system-level considerations that can be addressed to improve the quality and continuity of COVID care from acute settings, to rehabilitation, and back to the community.