

Medical officials estimate Long COVID affects 1 million in Spain

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17 February 2022

Recent data on the long-term impact of COVID-19 exposes the disastrous results of the vaccine-only strategy implemented by the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government and its allied trade unions. One million Spaniards are likely suffering from Long COVID, including around 200,000 children.

Last week, Spain passed the milestone of 10 million confirmed COVID-19 cases in a population of 47 million, according to the Ministry of Health. Despite high vaccination rates, COVID-19 cases exploded over the Christmas holidays, giving Spain one of Europe's highest incidence rates. Of Spain's 10 million cases, over 3.6 million were recorded in January 2022 alone, driven mainly by the highly infectious Omicron variant, with over three times more cases in January than in December 2021.

This is the result of the PSOE-Podemos policy, shared by all Europe's major governments, embracing mass COVID-19 infections under cover of declaring the virus "endemic."

The 10 million threshold drove primary care doctors, pharmacists, nurses and psychologists to establish a consensus on defining Long COVID last week. Despite the impact on the lives of millions of patients who report symptoms derived from the COVID-19 infection, there is no consensus on action and no procedure established to treat the symptoms of these patients in Spain, even though the World Health Organization (WHO) has had an official definition since last October.

According to the WHO, Long COVID "refers collectively to the constellation of long-term symptoms that some people experience after they have had COVID-19." It adds:

"While most people who develop COVID-19 fully recover, some people develop a variety of mid- and

long-term effects like fatigue, breathlessness and cognitive dysfunction (for example, confusion, forgetfulness, or a lack of mental focus and clarity). Some people also experience psychological effects as part of post COVID-19 condition.

"These symptoms might persist from their initial illness or develop after their recovery. They can come and go or relapse over time.

"Post COVID-19 condition can affect a person's ability to perform daily activities such as work or household chores."

In Spain the Association for Self-Care of Health (Anefp), with the support of the Spanish Society of General and Family Physicians (SEMG), the Spanish Society of Clinical, Family and Community Pharmacy (Sefac), the General Council of Nursing, the General Council of Psychology of Spain and the patient association Long COVID Acts promoted a first report focused on the mild symptoms of the disease that some long-term patients present.

Anefp General Director Jaume Pey told the Spanish daily *ABC* that the document aims "to give some guidelines for action: firstly, to identify these patients effectively and, secondly, to treat them by relieving their symptoms and monitoring their evolution, so as to improve their quality of life."

As there have been more than 10 million positive cases reported in Spain as of this month, according to data from the Ministry of Health, "it can be estimated that there are approximately more than 1 million people affected by persistent COVID in Spain, which represents at least 10 percent of those infected by COVID-19," the report states.

The head of the pulmonology service at the Quirón de Córdoba hospital, Luis Manuel Entrenas, told the daily *La Vanguardia* that Long COVID is not related to the

severity of the initial infection: it can affect both patients who suffered mildly and those who suffered severely and had to be hospitalized. In addition, normally, Long COVID sufferers are not people with a history of previous pathologies.

Spain still has COVID-19 indicators at high levels. The number of daily new infections is still above 60,000. In the last week, 1,760 deaths have been recorded, and since February 1, 2,362. The daily average of deaths so far exceeds 200 in February. Spain has suffered over 122,000 excess deaths since the pandemic began.

At 9,126 COVID-19 deaths in Spain since mid-October, the current wave of infections over the last four months is more deadly than any four-month period since the winter of 2020–2021, before the availability of vaccines.

The enormous death toll and incalculable wider effect on health is the direct result of the criminal and murderous policy pursued by the PSOE-Podemos government. Having refused to follow a scientifically-guided policy to eliminate the pandemic, instead prioritising the interests of Spain's banks and big business over the health and lives of its population, it is now proceeding to eliminate the last remaining mitigation measures in place.

Last week, it announced the end of the mandatory wearing of masks outdoors. Testing and contact tracing have been slashed, and the infection figures are being calculated using new counting methods. It now plans to reduce the number of days people infected with COVID-19 should self-isolate from seven to five days or as little as three days for the asymptomatic.

Among the regions of Spain that as of February 15 no longer have any official restrictions related to COVID-19 are the Madrid region, Catalonia, Andalucia and Murcia. Only four regions—Aragon, Galicia, La Rioja and Valencia—still maintain a vaccine passport requirement.

Scientists are voicing their opposition. Epidemiologist Quique Bassat of the Global Health Institute told the Spanish online daily *Nius Diario* that there is scientific proof that "many people are still capable of infecting others from five to six days after testing positive." He added: "It's a risk to reduce the isolation period of positive cases if we are letting potentially infectious people move around freely

outdoors."

César Carballo, vice-president of the Spanish Society of Emergency Medicine, said: "It's clearly not an epidemiological measure, but rather an economic and work one."

The PSOE-Podemos government is now leading the push within the European Union to change the way COVID-19 is monitored to one like seasonal flu. Having abandoned the mitigation strategy, the government is now pursuing a herd immunity strategy like the rest of EU governments and the US.

The costs of this policy are appalling. Already over 3,000 people die every day in Europe, and this number is rising due to the steep increase in infections and low vaccination rates in many countries. This inevitably leads to increased infections on other continents, where even fewer people are vaccinated, and increases the risk of more infectious and deadly variants developing that are resistant to existing COVID-19 vaccines.

There is no scientific justification for the murderous herd immunity strategy, which has political motivations. To keep the economy running and profits flowing, the ruling class is willing to sacrifice countless lives and the health of entire generations.

The entire Spanish political establishment supports herd immunity policies, from the fascistic Vox party to the ruling PSOE and Podemos parties and their various political satellites. Only an independent movement of the international working class, opposed to Podemos and the PSOE, can stop this murderous policy and mobilize the vast popular opposition that exists to a policy of mass infection in order to eliminate transmission of the virus and halt the pandemic.



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