

On ME Awareness Day, Advocacy Groups Urge Royal College of Psychiatrists to Align with Current Evidence

Tuesday 12 May, 2026

Long Covid Advocacy, alongside supporting organisations and signatories from the ME and Long Covid communities, has published an open letter to the President-Elect of the Royal College of Psychiatrists raising concerns about how Long Covid is currently framed within their International Congress 2026.

Released for ME Awareness Day, the letter argues that despite increasing biomedical evidence in both ME and Long Covid, psychosocial and behavioural frameworks continue to dominate the interpretation and presentation of post-acute viral illness within psychiatric settings.

Signatories express particular concern about the continued prominence of figures associated with psychiatric-led psychosocial models historically applied to ME. This includes approaches linked to graded exercise therapy (GET), which was removed from NICE guidance following extensive evidence of patient harm. They argue that these frameworks continue to shape the perception and management of Long Covid.

The letter states:

"We urge the Royal College, under your incoming presidency, to take a clear leadership position in ensuring that its programming reflects current understanding rather than inherited psychosocial interpretive frameworks."

The open letter calls on the Royal College of Psychiatrists to:

- Ensure that Congress programming on ME and Long Covid reflects current biomedical evidence and clinical guidance, and is not presented through outdated behavioural or psychosocial models.
- Review how speaker sequencing and session framing influence the interpretation of evidence.
- Ensure that patient expertise is positioned as an independent form of knowledge, not subsumed within pre-existing theoretical models.
- Align teaching and outputs with NICE guideline NG206 and the current evidence base on Long Covid, ensuring that psychological aspects of care do not supersede or redefine the underlying biological condition.

The signatories state that these concerns are not abstract academic disagreements, but issues that directly affect clinical reasoning, service design, and patient care pathways for people living with ME and Long Covid.

Claire Every, spokesperson for Long Covid Advocacy:

"People with ME have lived for decades with the consequences of psychiatric and behavioural frameworks being used to reinterpret serious post-viral illness. We are now watching many of the same assumptions, narratives, and clinical approaches being extended into Long Covid, despite a rapidly growing biomedical evidence base. This is not about excluding psychological support from care. It is about ensuring that psychological models do not supersede or redefine the underlying disease."

The full letter and list of signatories can be read here:
<https://www.longcovidadvoc.com/rcpsychic>

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Long Covid Advocacy

T. 07708836858

E. hello@longcovidadvoc.com

W. <https://www.longcovidadvoc.com/>

Additional Contact(s):

Rupert Higham: 07752247386

ruperthigham@gmail.com

[View Online](#)

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