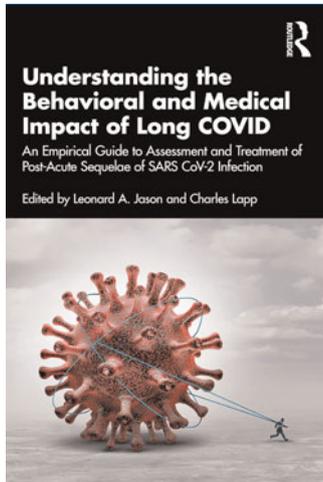


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



Understanding the Behavioral and Medical Impact of Long COVID

Edited by Leonard A. Jason and Charles Lapp. Routledge. 2023. £60 (pb). 298 pp. ISBN 9781032442242

Psychiatrists

Drs Jason and Lapp analyse Long COVID through a translational research lens combining medical, biological and social sciences to provide a timely summary of the evidence-based research concerning Long COVID's behavioural and medical impact. In 15 chapters, an international collaboration of 38 experts review the pathophysiology for each impacted organ system, and identify current and potential research and clinical interventions. This comprehensive text delivers a benchmark foundation of the existing Long COVID research and interventions.

Just as SARS CoV-2 was described as a mysterious, acute illness, posing worldwide healthcare challenges, it is also creating a second pandemic: Long COVID. This massive disabling event is gaining recognition as a long-term, multisystemic illness.

Further, a subset of those with Long COVID meet diagnostic criteria for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Post-infectious illness resulting in disability is not new; what is new is that there is an identified pathogen, SARS CoV-2. Researchers are able to track prospectively affected individuals, and hopefully this will guide appropriate interventions earlier than was the case with prior post-infectious epidemics.

The above insights are particularly relevant for psychiatrists and mental health practitioners. Key chapters of interest to psychiatrists include: 'Fatigue and Long COVID', 'Neurocognitive disorders', 'Brain and nervous system', 'Gastrointestinal disorders', 'Mental health disorders', and 'Patient perspectives on Long COVID advocacy, care and research'. The 'Patient perspectives' chapter is a must-read as patients were the first to describe, name and initiate Long COVID research. Jason and Lapp posit that the Long COVID evidence suggests that a psychosomatic explanation is simplistic and inaccurate.

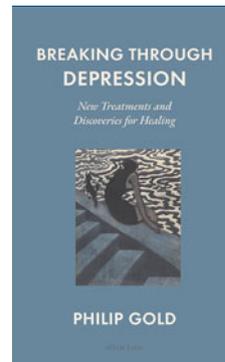
In summary, classifying Long COVID as a functional illness, psychosomatic or with medically unexplained symptoms appears outmoded, in comparison with the expanding pathophysiological evidence-based research with its emerging methods of possible treatments for patients experiencing post-infectious illness. Further, this

challenges the premise that post-infectious illness will be cured by either cognitive behavioural therapy or graded exercise therapy. Secondary prevention efforts that target minimising further disease progression will benefit from the pathophysiological understanding of Long COVID, and interventions appear promising.

Long COVID-grant reviewers and researchers are advised to be well versed on the book's content, coupled with continuing efforts to update their understanding of the emerging evidence-based knowledge in order to avoid repeating past research mistakes. Jason and Lapp with their co-authors set an ambitious agenda and have delivered a rigorous analysis of Long COVID to researchers, clinicians, policymakers, funders and patients. It is a must-read for all in the Long COVID field.

Susan Taylor-Brown , MPH, PhD, Clinical Professor of Pediatrics (Retired), Golisano Children's Hospital, University of Rochester Medical Center, New York, USA.
E-mail: staylorbrown24@gmail.com

doi:10.1192/bjp.2024.22



Breaking through Depression: New Treatments and Discoveries for Healing

by Philip Gold. Allen Lane. 2023. £25 (hb). 272 pp. ISBN 978-0241659052

The last few years have seen a proliferation of popular science books in the mental health and neuroscience fields. Some of these are excellent but, sadly, many are low on evidence and big on hype and self-promotion. Phillip Gold's book on the causes and treatment of depression is a very welcome change. It is written by an expert clinician scientist who has dedicated his entire professional life – 50 years and counting – to researching and treating depressive disorders. Gold has made an enormous contribution to psychiatry and has an infectious optimism about how current and imminent discoveries will soon be translated into better treatments for patients.

There are many excellent aspects to this book. The most striking is the way in which complex science is communicated in simple and compelling language. In the early chapters, Gold suggests that depression should be considered 'an adaptive stress response gone awry' and explains how an otherwise normal stress response can, in some people, 'morph into a pernicious state of anguish and despair'. He reminds us that we have evolved to react to threat situations with a narrowing of our attention, with increased heart rate and blood pressure, increased blood glucose, and with increased inflammation and blood clotting (in preparation for injury). For most of us, these responses resolve as the threat dissipates but for individuals made vulnerable by their genetics and previous experiences, this can become a sustained response that results in depression. This sustained stress response also explains the long-term physical sequelae of depression, such as obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, stroke and premature mortality. It also explains why depression should be considered a whole-body disorder.