

## **About Sacramento's new Post-COVID-19 Clinic**

### ***Clinic director and pulmonary expert explains how UC Davis is caring for coronavirus patients whose symptoms last sometimes months***

Mark Avdalovic (*pronounced av-DOLL-oh-vich*) is a specialist in pulmonary and critical care medicine and is medical director of the UC Davis Pulmonary Clinics. The new Post-COVID-19 Clinic offers comprehensive care to patients who appear to have survived COVID-19 but still have long-lasting, worrisome symptoms. Here, he answers questions about the new clinic.

#### **Why are you starting this new clinic?**

Our pulmonary care specialists, along with the hospital medicine and emergency medicine teams, have been on the front line taking care of patients in the hospital with COVID-19, where our focus was to save lives. However, as patients recover from the initial attack of the virus, physicians throughout the region are seeing more and more patients with ongoing COVID-related health concerns — like breathing issues, exercise endurance, headaches, tiredness or concentration problems. We want to help them. The post-COVID clinic will provide a centralized comprehensive approach to address patients' wide array of symptoms.

#### **How widespread is this problem?**

There are no precise statistics on the number of long-term COVID-19 patients — people who, in theory, have recovered from the worst impacts of the coronavirus, tested negative, but still have symptoms lasting weeks or months. The Journal of the American Medical Association in a [recent article](#), as well as [a study](#) from a team of British scientists, estimate about 10% of COVID-19 patients fight these long-term symptoms. That's in line with what UC Davis Health is seeing.

#### **Are the people who were the most seriously ill with COVID-19 most likely to have these ongoing symptoms?**

No, that's what is so interesting. Those ongoing symptoms aren't necessarily associated with how sick someone was at first with the virus. We've seen people with mild cases and no previous health issues who are affected for months afterwards with on again, off again symptoms. In fact, recent publications have highlighted that some patients without symptoms during their acute infection appear to have evidence of inflammation in their lungs and heart.

#### **Why is the clinic based in pulmonary medicine?**

With all patients, COVID-19 is a respiratory infection, and patients with ongoing symptoms will often continue to experience respiratory complaints. COVID-19 can have long term effects on the airways, lung capacity and the ability to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide. Our experience in treating the patients in the hospital helps us have a thorough understanding of the potential long-term effects. The opportunity to see the patients in the clinic brings the care full circle.

#### **What will you do in your clinic that isn't being done elsewhere?**

First, we'll be providing one place where patients can get answers to their questions and potentially start on a treatment plan. We have also partnered with specialists throughout our health system to provide timely consultations. Given what we have seen so far in patients, we expect to collaborate with cardiology, vascular, neurology and infectious disease-immunology specialists.

Second, we'll be gathering information for the benefit of COVID-19 patients throughout the world. There are just a few institutions like ours looking at the lifecycle effects of COVID-19 and setting standards for that longer-term care. We'll be one of them.

**What role will telemedicine play in the clinic?**

Our leadership in telehealth has been extremely useful for patient consultations during the pandemic, both for COVID-19 patients and our patients who have other tough lung conditions like asthma, COPD, pulmonary fibrosis or cystic fibrosis. It will be helpful for the new clinic, too, especially for patients who can't travel to Sacramento or who still test positive for the virus and shouldn't be out in public.

**What are the criteria for patients in the clinic?**

We are available for any patient who has tested positive for COVID-19, had their first symptoms at least 30 days ago and is concerned about health issues that weren't apparent before the virus struck or who feel they are not back to their normal health. We are here to help.

*Physicians who would like to refer a patient should call 1-800-4-UCDAVIS. Patients who would like to be seen in the clinic should call 1-800-2-UCDAVIS.*