

# Multi-centre Study on Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions of Healthcare Workers Towards Long Covid

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## Background

Long Covid (LC) occurs in individuals with a history of SARS-CoV-2 infection, usually 3 months from the onset, with symptoms that last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. LC prevalence and pathways of care for patients with LC vary across jurisdictions. The knowledge and attitudes possessed by healthcare workers (HCWs) towards LC is unknown.

The PERCISE study is a multi-centre study investigating seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies among healthcare workers in St James's Hospital, Dublin (SJH) and University Hospital Galway (UHG). Following on from this, a nested study investigating knowledge, attitudes and perception (KAP) towards LC was performed.

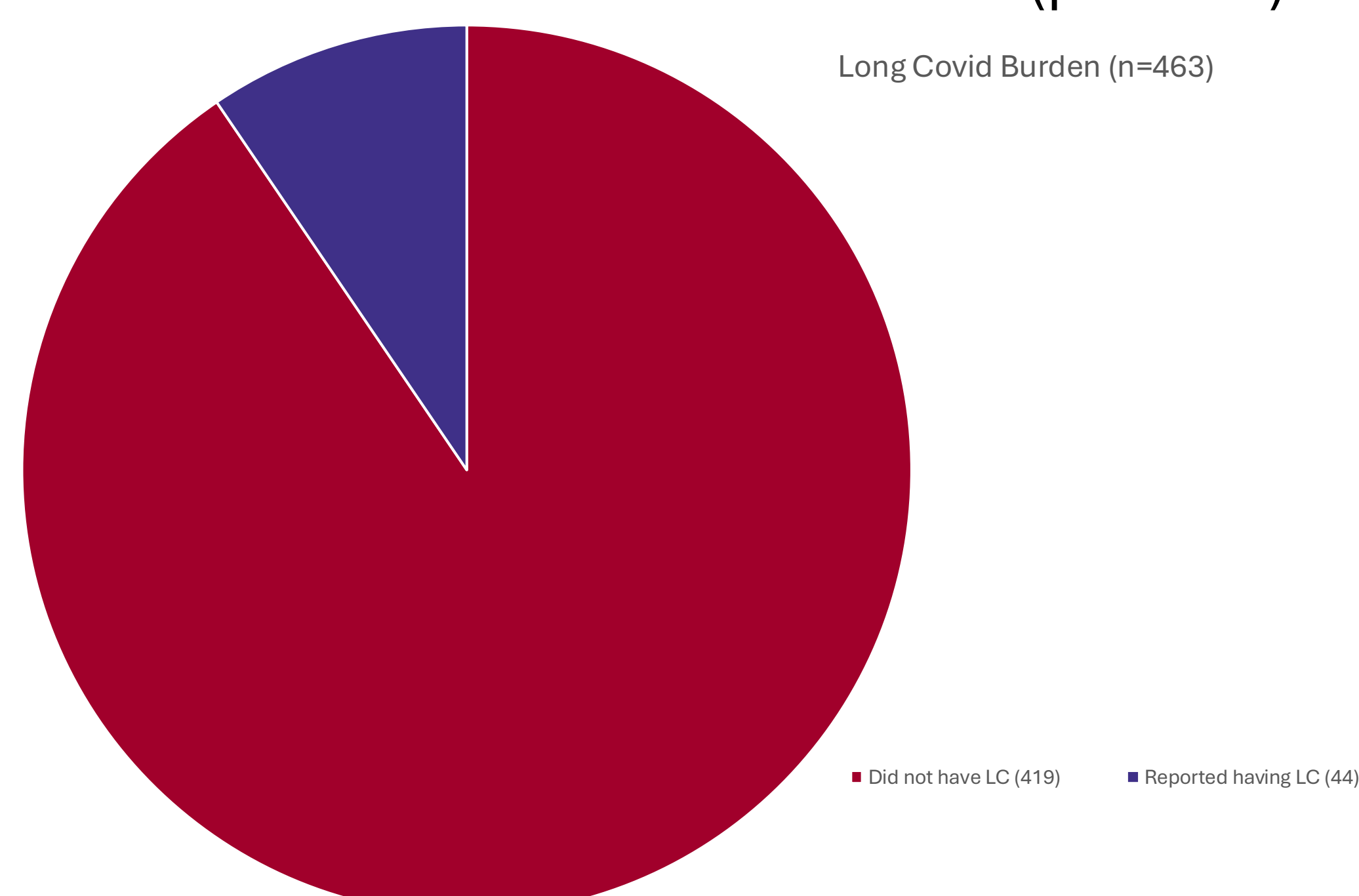
## Methods

HCWs at SJH and UHG were invited to complete electronic questionnaires on LC burden and KAP. The KAP survey was only provided to participants directly engaged in patient care. This was performed in conjunction with WHO-Europe. Only Irish data is reported here.

## Results

### Long Covid Burden

- 463 participants responded to the LC burden survey. The majority (420/463, 90%) were employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 44/463 (9.5%) report having had LC, with 31/44 having symptoms for more than 4 years. More than half (26/44, 59%) have not returned to their pre-COVID health.
- 27/44 have missed work due to LC, and 10/44 have changed their work practices due to LC.
- LC was not found to be associated with age, sex, having a clinical role, duration of employment or number of COVID vaccines received. It was associated with having a pre-existing chronic illness (9% without, 20% with,  $p=0.02$ ) and with the number of COVID infections ( $p=0.003$ ).

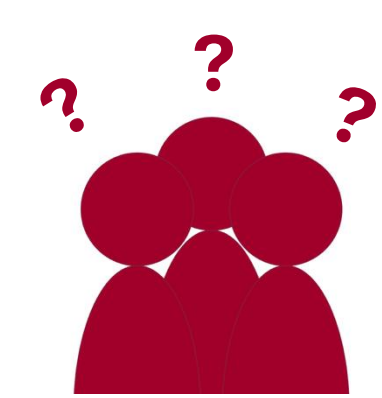
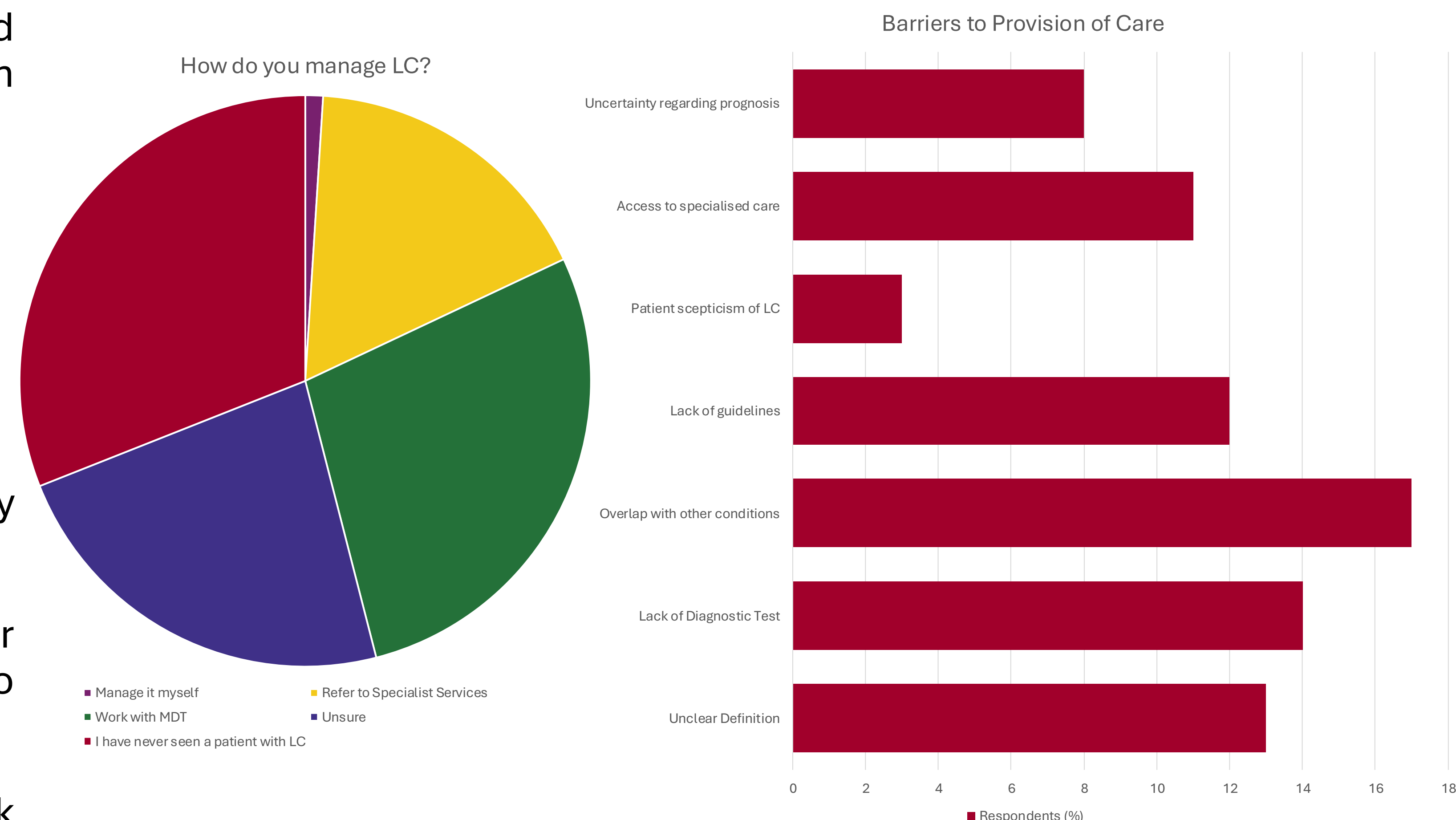


59% Have not returned to pre-COVID health  
70% have symptoms ongoing for >4 years  
61% gave missed work due to LC

## Results

### Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions

- 243 HCWs were directly engaged in patient care. 225 (95%) were aware of LC.
- Most respondents (82%) believe that it is a legitimate condition, with 17 being unsure and 1% not thinking it is legitimate. 63% believed LC can occur following an asymptomatic Covid-19 infection.
- Regarding management, 1% preferred to manage themselves, 17% referred to specialist services, 28% work with MDT, 23% were unsure and 31% have never seen LC patients.
- 81% are unaware of any guidelines for LC management and 61% of respondents do not feel they have suitable resources to manage LC.
- Only 6% have received either formal or informal training regarding LC management, but 60% are likely or very likely to engage in continued medical education regarding LC management.



81% are unaware of LC management guidelines  
61% feel they do not have suitable resources to manage LC effectively

## Discussion

The burden of LC in HCWs in this cohort was 9% with a resulting impact on work practices. More than half of patients with LC have missed time in work, with almost 1 in 4 changing their work practices to account for their illness.

The KAP survey demonstrates that while the majority of HCWs recognise LC as a legitimate medical condition, there remain significant barriers towards the provision of care for these patients. 94% of respondents had never received formal or informal training regarding LC, and a plurality of respondents had never encountered a patient with LC. These, combined with a lack of awareness surrounding existing guidelines for management, provide barriers towards the provision of effective care.

Despite these limitations, the respondents demonstrated an interest and willingness to engage in further education regarding LC which may result in improvements in care provided, and in increased utilisation of pre-existing services for these patients.

## References:

1. McGrath J, Kenny C, Nielsen CS, Domegan L, Walsh C, Rooney P, Walsh S, Conlon N, Brady G, Ibrahim A, Dunne J, McCormack W, Corcoran N, Allen N, Fleming C, Bergin C. SARS-CoV-2 epidemiology, antibody dynamics, and neutralisation capacity in Irish healthcare workers in the era of booster COVID-19 vaccinations. *Front Med (Lausanne)*. 2023 Jan 26;10:1078022. doi: 10.3389/fmed.2023.1078022. PMID: 36778745; PMCID: PMC9909389.