

# Open Letter to the Royal College of Psychiatrists



**Dear Prof. Subodh Dave, President-elect,**

12<sup>th</sup> May, 2026

We are writing on ME Awareness Day in relation to the Royal College of Psychiatrists' ongoing work on ME and Long Covid, and in the context of your stated commitment to integrating patient expertise into clinical practice and institutional decision-making.

This commitment carries significant responsibility in conditions where patients have experienced harm from mischaracterisation, delayed recognition, and the privileging of theoretical psychosocial explanations in clinical and academic settings.

We are particularly concerned by the inclusion of speakers Paul Garner, Alan Carson, and Trudie Chalder in Congress programming, given their longstanding association with psychiatric-led psychosocial frameworks applied to ME, which continue to shape the clinical interpretation of Long Covid.

While the programme includes biomedical terminology and references to patient experience, its overall structure continues to position psychosocial and behavioural frameworks as the primary lens through which post-acute viral illness is interpreted and managed.

For example, cognitive symptoms and potential neurological markers are framed within a psychiatric-led session; personal experience of post-infectious fatigue is presented alongside psychological recovery narratives; and cognitive behavioural therapy is positioned in relation to routine specialist clinic outcomes. This sequencing shapes how evidence is interpreted and which explanatory models are implicitly centred.

The inclusion of biomedical language does not in itself reflect a shift in underlying paradigm when interpretive authority remains organised around behavioural and psychosocial models. In this context, patient experience is situated within frameworks that determine its meaning in advance, rather than as an independent form of evidence.

Since the emergence of Long Covid, there has been a substantial expansion of biomedical research documenting multi-system physiological dysfunction, alongside long-established findings in ME. This includes immune dysregulation, autonomic dysfunction, metabolic impairment, genetic findings from DecodeME and post-exertional malaise, reflected in current NICE guideline NG206.

Against this backdrop, the continued prominence of proponents of psychosocially framed models in defining how these conditions are presented risks misalignment with current evidence and the emerging paradigm.

We therefore ask that the Royal College:

- Ensure 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 all 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.

These are not abstract concerns. The framing of these conditions directly influences clinical reasoning, service design, and patient care pathways.

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.

Yours sincerely,

## Long Covid Advocacy

### Organisations

25% ME Group  
Dutch Platform for MDs with IACC  
Forward-ME  
Hope 4 ME & Fibro Northern Ireland  
Inclusive New Normal  
Keyworker Petition Campaign (KWPC)  
Lab of Lived Experience  
Liberal Democrat Disability Association  
Long Covid Physio  
Long Covid Scotland  
ME Action UK  
ME Association  
M.E Foggy Dog  
Not Recovered UK  
Physios for ME

### Individuals

Mr Tomaso Antonacci  
Natalie Boulton  
Dr Harriet Carroll  
Dr Leanne Curelli  
Prof Todd Davenport  
Mr Yanto Evans  
Dr Peter Gordon  
Dr Laura Gray  
Dr Deepti Gurdasani  
Dr Elke Hausmann  
Assoc Prof Rupert Higham  
Dr David Joffe  
Prof Doug Kell  
Dr Asad Khan  
Mrs Beatrice Khouri

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## Organisations

Richmond, Kingston & West London ME Group  
Scottish Healthcare Workers Coalition  
#There4ME  
WE&ME Foundation  
Welsh Association of ME & CFS Support

## Individuals

Ms Elisabeth Klaar  
Andrew Klaassen MD  
Dr Marianne Lynch  
Cass Macdonald  
Dr Ben Marsh  
Tom Molmens MD  
Mr Michael Natt  
Jolien Plantinga MD  
Mrs Nicky Proctor  
Dr Clare Rayner  
Mr James Robertson  
Dr Selina Shaw  
Dr Charles Shepherd  
Mrs Lindsay Skipper  
Dr Nigel Speight  
Dr Michael Stingl  
Fen van Rhijn MD  
Dr Joanne Van der Nagel  
Dr Mark Vink  
Mr Jonah Weisz