



Letter to the Editor

Catatonia outburst: A post pandemic-related phenomena?

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Dear Prof. Daina Crafa,

Since the onset of the global pandemic, a multitude of studies have been undertaken to ascertain the potential correlations between COVID-19 and other neuropsychiatric conditions. With substantial evidence now available, the latest wave of research has sought to specify various associations between COVID and specific pathophysiological issues, as well as different prevalence across geographic regions and pandemic stages (Salanti et al., 2022).

In a manner akin to prior epidemics linked to different strains of coronaviruses, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), instances of severe neuropsychiatric disorders, including catatonia, have been documented in individuals affected with COVID-19. At first, these occurrences were limited in number, but later, they grew more prevalent, as documented in significant collections of case series and even comprehensive systematic reviews (Rogers et al., 2020).

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A quick search on PubMed for the term "catatonia" revealed a significant increase in published scientific articles, especially in the two years following the onset of the pandemic. In the five years prior to the pandemic (2014-2019), there was a steady rise in the number of published articles concerning catatonia, with an average increase of 5.65% compared to the previous year. In the first two years following the pandemic (2020-2021), there were increases of 22% and 22.95%, respectively, compared to the preceding year. When comparing the number of articles published in 2021 to that of 2019, there was a notable 50% rise observed.

It is noteworthy that there has been a substantial rise in the number of publications pertaining to catatonia (since 2019, a total of 1495 papers on PubMed have included the term "catatonia"). Further in-depth study is required to understand the correlation and mechanisms of association between COVID-19 infection and catatonia. A search for the terms "catatonia AND (coronavirus OR COVID)" yielded only 65 publications, which account for a mere 4.34% of the overall publications since 2019.

It is essential to do further investigation into the potential factors contributing to the notable rise in catatonia diagnosis, namely during the period subsequent to the onset of the pandemic. Further, it is crucial to synthesize findings from the ensuing upsurge in scientific inquiry, as indicated by the rise in publications published in peer-reviewed journals.

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