

Covid sufferers 'more likely to develop dementia'

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PEOPLE diagnosed with Covid-19 are more likely to develop depression, dementia, psychosis and stroke, a new study has found.

Researchers at Oxford University looked at the medical records of more than 500,000 patients in the United States and their chances of developing one of 14 common psychological or neurological conditions.

After looking at a cohort who had contracted Covid-19 – and comparing it with those who had flu and other respiratory infections – they concluded that coronavirus was associated with more subsequent brain conditions.

Sufferers were 16% more likely to develop a psychological or neurological disorder after Covid-19 than after other respiratory infections, and 44% more likely than people recovering from flu.

Moreover, the more severely ill with coronavirus the patient had been, the more likely they were to receive a subsequent mental health or brain disorder diagnosis.

Researchers said anxiety and mood disorders were found to be the most common diagnoses, but were more likely to be down to the stress of the experience of being very ill or taken to hospital.

They said conditions like stroke and dementia were more likely to be down to the biological impacts of the virus itself or of the body's reaction to infection in general.

The study, published in the *Lancet Psychiatry* journal and looked at Covid cases diagnosed in the previous six months, was observational so therefore could not deduce whether coronavirus had caused any of the diagnoses.

Dr Sara Imarisio, head of research at Alzheimer's Research UK, said: "This retrospective study, mainly based on US data, indicates that people are at an increased risk of being diagnosed with dementia in the six months following a Covid19 diagnosis, compared to those diagnosed with the flu or other respiratory disease. This risk is highest for those who were admitted to intensive treatment units.

"While this study analysed data from the first six months following a Covid19 diagnosis, this increased risk may not be limited to this timeframe. Given that the peak of Covid-19 hospitalisations in the UK occurred in January this year, and we already expect a backlog of people waiting to come forward or be seen about memory concerns, services must be prepared to deal with a large number of potential dementia cases."