

Physiological predictors of long-term effects of COVID-19 in patients with SARS-CoV-2: Focus on lymphocyte proliferation-improving micronutrients

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Patients with long-term effects of coronavirus disease, the so-called "long-term COVID-19 syndrome" (long-COVID-19) after SARS-CoV-2 infection, have a postponed recovery lasting from 4 weeks and up to six months, spread worldwide.

Physiological predictors based on human blood biomarkers and host-virus responses to SARS-CoV-2 are still unknown. There is growing evidence about the impact of micronutrients on improving lymphocyte proliferation and their essential roles for a functioning human immune system and regulating metabolic health. This paper aims to review information about micronutrients in patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection that determines long-COVID-19 outcomes and highlight the importance of diagnostics in predictors of long-COVID-19. We reviewed articles returned from searches on PubMed/SCOPUS/Web of Science/ EMBASE databases using a combination of terms "long COVID-19", "long-term effects of COVID-19", "post-COVID-19 symptoms", "COVID-19 associated stress", "micronutrients". Evidence indicates the relationship between lymphocyte proliferation improving micronutrient level and long-COVID-19 induction. Zinc, selenium, iron, manganese have an immunomodulatory function in innate and adaptive immune responses to viral infection. Anti-inflammatory functions of Vits A and B groups include the regulation of lymphocyte proliferation and metabolic health. Further research using sampling and artificial intelligence-assisted algorithms could assist in the recognition of the correlation of micronutrients and long-COVID-19 clinical outcomes.

Keywords: long COVID-19; Zinc, Selenium, Iron, Manganese, Copper, lymphocytes proliferation, Metabolic health.

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Фізіологічні предиктори довгострокових наслідків COVID-19 у пацієнтів з SARS-CoV-2: фокус на мікронутрієнти, що покращують проліферацію лімфоцитів

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Довгострокові наслідки коронавірусної хвороби, так званого «постковідного синдрому COVID-19» (long-COVID-19) після інфікування SARS-CoV-2, поширилися по всьому світу. Фізіологічні предиктори біомаркерів крові та реакції взаємодії «вірусу-господаря» на інфекцію SARS-CoV-2 досі невідомі. З'являється все більше доказів щодо позитивного впливу мікронутрієнтів на проліферацію лімфоцитів та їх важливу роль для функціонування імунної системи людини та регуляції метаболічного здоров'я. У цій статті розглянуто інформацію про те, як вміст мікронутрієнтів у пацієнтів із інфекцією SARS-CoV-2 визначає тривалі наслідки захворювання на COVID-19. Статті з пошукових запитів бібліографічних баз PubMed/SCOPUS/Web of Science/ EMBASE були переглянуті з використанням наступних термінів: "тривалий COVID-19", "довгострокові наслідки COVID-19", "постковідні симптоми", "стрес, пов'язаний з COVID-19", "мікронутрієнти". Дані джерела вказують на зв'язок між проліферацією лімфоцитів, вмістом мікронутрієнтів і тривалими наслідками COVID-19. Цинк, селен, залізо, магній беруть участь у реакціях природженого і набутого імунітету, а також мають імуномодельовальну дію проти вірусної інфекції. Вітаміни А і В володіють протизапальними функціями, регулюючи проліферацію лімфоцитів і метаболізм. Подальші дослідження з використанням біопроб і алгоритмів штучного інтелекту можуть допомогти у розпізнанні взаємозв'язку між мікронутрієнтами та довготривалими клінічними наслідками COVID-19.

Ключові слова: тривалий COVID-19, цинк, селен, залізо, марганець, мідь, проліферація лімфоцитів, метаболічне здоров'я.

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Introduction

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease – 2019) is a highly contagious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 (also known as 2019-nCoV). More than 80% of patients with COVID-19 have mild to moderate illness, and some patients are asymptomatic. However, between 10 and 20% of patients require hospitalization due to acute respiratory distress syndrome and multi-organ insufficiency. These complications are more common in older patients and immunosuppressed persons [1-3]. Overall, the mortality rate for COVID-19 is about 1-2%, and 4-6% for more virulent strains of the virus, especially in populations with high population density. One of the crucial features of COVID-19 is the development of long-term effects of coronavirus disease. This condition is called "long-term COVID-19 syndrome" (long-COVID-19), which often has no relation to the airway. Still, it can affect practically any organ and induce multiple systemic organ damage based on endothelial dysfunction [4,5].

Most of the symptoms of long-COVID-19 result from damage to the central and peripheral nervous systems, including the involvement of MRC1–microglial subpopulation as the result of an increasingly inflamed central nervous system (CNS) environment, specifically, the choroid plexus [6] and stress [7,8]. It is not surprising that the new disease created confusion, panic, and chaos that almost predictably led to stress [9,10]. Stress reactions are often the side products of economic problems or complicating factors, especially in long COVID-19. This global pandemic situation has harmful economic consequences. The World Bank report of June 8, 2020, states that COVID-19 produced "the fastest, steepest downgrades in consensus growth projections among all global recessions since 1990" [11]. Thus, preventive measures for long-COVID-19 are vital elements for mitigating the pandemics – individual lifestyle, which impacts their well-being – however, several questions about the physiological background of long COVID-19 causes are lacking. Based on the current evidence, this review will discuss physiological predictors and focus on the role of micronutrients that impact the improvement of lymphocyte proliferation and could determine long COVID-19. Their identification could help create appropriate personalized precise, preventive, and diagnostic management strategies for patients with long-COVID-19.

Our study aimed to search the latest information by screening scientific literature in multiple databases including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and EMBASE platforms, to identify relevant studies, using keywords like "long-COVID-19", "long-term effects of COVID-19", "post-COVID-19 symptoms", "COVID-19-associated stress", "micronutrients." Studies were included in research when they met the following conditions: conducted on adults (age > 18 years), published in English. The following studies were excluded: studies with children, nonhumans, cross-sectional and uncontrolled studies, vitamins C, D, and E effects on immune system improvement, which have been widely discussed in the literature recently. The publication dates of most of the selected articles are between 2007-2021 [fig.1].

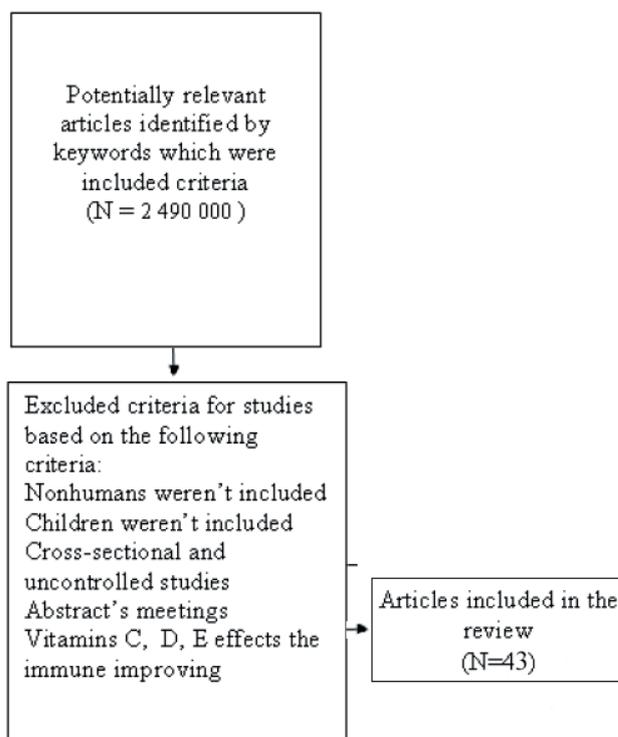


Figure1. Flowchart illustrating number of reviewed studies associated with lymphocyte proliferation improving in long COVID-19 screened with included and excluded criteria

Prevalent clinical manifestation of long COVID-19

The most common long-term consequences after SARS-CoV-2 infection are a wide range of signs, including muscle pain, fatigue, and various mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression, memory disorders, hair loss, anosmia,

ageusia, and hearing loss and sleep disorders [12]. Some patients who needed hospitalization, even after six months of recovery, experienced one or more disease symptoms. Long COVID-19 has a significant effect on the brain, causes anxiety. Recent studies indicate that 30% of live-in survivors were diagnosed with psychiatric or neurological conditions within six months of infection [13]. Nerve signs and symptoms of long-COVID-19 may include fatigue, myalgia, headache, cognitive impairment ("brain mist"). At the same time, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, and post-traumatic stress disorder occur in 30-40% of patients who survive COVID-19 [14]. Pathophysiological mechanisms of long-term complications of COVID-19 include microvascular thrombosis, impaired immune regulation, and inflammation [2,7,12]

Other organ systems participating in long COVID-19 include respiratory, cardiovascular, hematological, gastroenterological, endocrine, and renal systems [15]. No studies show physiological changes that could play a crucial role in inducing the long COVID-19 syndrome.

Micronutrients as physiological predictors for the long COVID-19 syndrome

The speed and quality of the body's immune response depend on several factors. In particular, the lifestyle-related physical activity, which is important for releasing anti-inflammatory myokines [16], quality and quantity of sleep [17], and the necessary level of micronutrients, responsible for virus-host defensive responses [18]. For example, the rate of proliferation of lymphocytes depends on several micronutrients, including trace elements and metabolic compounds, and if they are not available in sufficient quantities, human immune defense declines [19]. Micronutrients are known to affect the lymphocyte proliferation rate. Table 1 contains those that affect the immune system the most: Zinc [20], selenium [21], iron [22,23], copper (Cu) [24], vitamin A [25], manganese (Mn) [26], biotin (B7) [27], thiamine (B1) [28].

Updates on the impact of micronutrients on immunity patients with SARS-CoV-2

COVID-19-associated stress could modulate cellular or organic integrity by declining natural redox-based functions, such as intercel-

lular communication, vascular homeostasis, cell cycle, metabolic and bioenergetic signaling networks. They could induce a reciprocal relationship between the interaction of redox system agents and low-grade inflammation or metaflammation (inflammation with associated metabolic disorders) [38,39]. Since significant redox agents are involved in endothelial homeostasis during its injury in COVID-19, there are essential sulfur-containing metabolites for Hydrogen Sulfide production, L-arginine containing metabolites for Nitrogen Oxide (NO) production, tryptophan, lysine, arginine.

Some studies have shown a direct correlation between micronutrient deficiencies (e.g., zinc) responsible for the immune response and mortality from COVID-19 (fig. 1) [40-41]. Another essential micronutrient, selenium, has a similar clinical correlation with mortality and morbidity associated with COVID-19 [42]. However, 25% of Americans surveyed using a lymphocyte proliferation assay had a deficiency of five or more basic micronutrients. Most Americans (98%) have at least one deficiency, and about 33% have zinc deficiency [43]. It is well-known that micronutrient deficiency causes pro-inflammatory microbiota, which, in turn, affects the brain-gut axis and promotes stress-associated response, causing the body's defense resources to change. Thus, there is an urgent need to study predictors of changes in natural defensive reactions and functional reserve of the body, which form individual prerequisites for long-term COVID-19. There is a need to establish a quantitative correlation between nutritional deficiency and the severity of clinical signs of long COVID-19. Establishing a quantitative relationship between micronutritional deficiencies and long COVID-19 recovery prognosis will determine their optimal correction and future use for the long COVID-19 prevention, clinical diagnosis, and treatment protocols.

The complexity and multifactorial origin of long COVID-19 syndrome require an interdisciplinary research approach, powerful enough to provide reliable shreds of evidence for detecting their predictors related to lymphocyte proliferation improving micronutrients. Appropriate use of micronutrients will create better health care policies for the long COVID-19 syndrome.

Table 1

Benefits of micronutrients for lymphocytes proliferation improvement using immunity and metabolic effects

Micronutrients	Effects on lymphocyte proliferation	Effects on others functions	Effects on metabolic health
Zinc (Zn)	↓Zinc reduces the number of lymphocytes, disrupts lymphocyte development, ↓proliferation, ↑apoptosis, and thymic atrophy; ↓IL-2 production by helper T cells, and defects in T cells subpopulations [20]	↓Zn correlates with glycated hemoglobin and is associated with inflammatory bowel disease [29] ↓Zn enhances liver damage, leading to ↑serum ALT, accumulation of lipids in the liver, oxidative injury, inflammation [30]	↑Zn improves glycemic control in T2DM [29] ↑Zn improves glucose tolerance, HOMA-beta, ↓hyperglycemia, IR, glucose intolerance, obesity [31]; ↑ glucose uptake, GLUT4 translocation, ↓ both gluconeogenic enzyme activities, as well as insulin signaling inhibitors, ↓ cytokine production, activation of NFkB [29]
Selenium (Se)	↑Se associated with CD4+ T cell activation, distribution, and variation; inducing Th1 phenotype; ↑Se cytotoxicity of CD8+ T cells [21]; ↑the activity of NK cells; preserving T cell expansion → T cell-dependent antibody making → avoiding the vasoconstriction and changes in blood coagulation [21]	↓Se links to changes in cellular metabolism, oxidative stress and inflammation [29]	↓Se and ↑Se status linked to IR, T2DM; ↓Se associated with serum insulin ↑ insulin sensitivity, antioxidant activating [29]; ↓ Related to beta-cell oxidative damage [29]
Iron (Fe)	↓Fe leads to suppression of lymphocyte proliferation; Fe uptake via TfR1 is essential for B and T cell responses [22]; lymphocytes need Fe for the successful cellular and humoral response [22]	Plays an essential role in metabolism as a component of some proteins and enzymes; Involved in oxygen transport, DNA synthesis, energy production, electron and oxygen transport [22]	↓Fe → Anemia; ↓The cellular response to hypoxia is disturbed [22]
Copper (Cu)	↓ Cu leads to ↓T cells activation and ↓IL-2 production; breaks T and B cellular responses to mitogen stimulation [24]	↑Cu has antioxidant activity	↑Cu is associated with T2DM, IR, BMI, T2DM risk are associated with Cu/ceruloplasmin [32]; ↑Cu → ↑hepatic lipid/TAG content, lipogenic genes [29]
Vitamin A (Vit A)	Vit A induces T cell Migration and CD169+ macrophage development [25]; necessary for regulatory T cells and promotes IL-22 synthesis [25]	↓Vit A → inflammation and damage gut barrier integrity → impairs insulin sensitivity and blood glucose regulation [29]	↓Vit A → ↑beta cell apoptosis → glucose intolerance → ↓insulin reaction, [29]; ↓beta-cell mass; ↑Vit A is associated with insulin sensitivity [33]; ↓visceral adiposity ↑ RBP1 in T2DM and obesity [29]
Manganese (Mn)	Mn ²⁺ ions antagonize the Ca ²⁺ influx; [26] Mn supplementations maintain macrophages viability, decrease in intracellular Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) and NO level [26]	↓Mn related with IBD [29]; ↑colon damage → intestinal leak → ↑inflammatory cytokines → ↑ oxidative stress → ↑DNA damage → ↓BMI [34]	↓Mn is associated with ↑T2DM risk via IR → glucose intolerance [29]; ↑Mn → ↑insulin production, ↑antioxidant activity → ↓pancreatic oxidative injury → ↓ renal lipid peroxidation [29]
Biotin (Vit B7)	↓Vit B7 → ↓ T regulatory cells, enhances differentiation of CD4+ T cells on the way to Th1 and Th17 cells; ↑levels of proinflammatory cytokines IFN-γ, IL-17 and TNF [27]	↓Vit B7 is associated with dysbiosis, Alopecia [29] ↑Biotin is associated with lower visceral fat mass [29]	↓Vit B7 → ↓ blood glucose, ↓ glucose utilization and lipogenesis [35]
Thiamin (Vit B1)	↓Thiamine → upregulates microglial cell CD40 expression [28]	↓ Thiamine → hyperglycemia-induced GI injury → neurological disorders [36]	Necessary for ideal insulin secretion [29]; ↓ Thiamine → diabetes [37]; ↑ Thiamine enhances glucose tolerance, ↓fasting blood glucose [29]

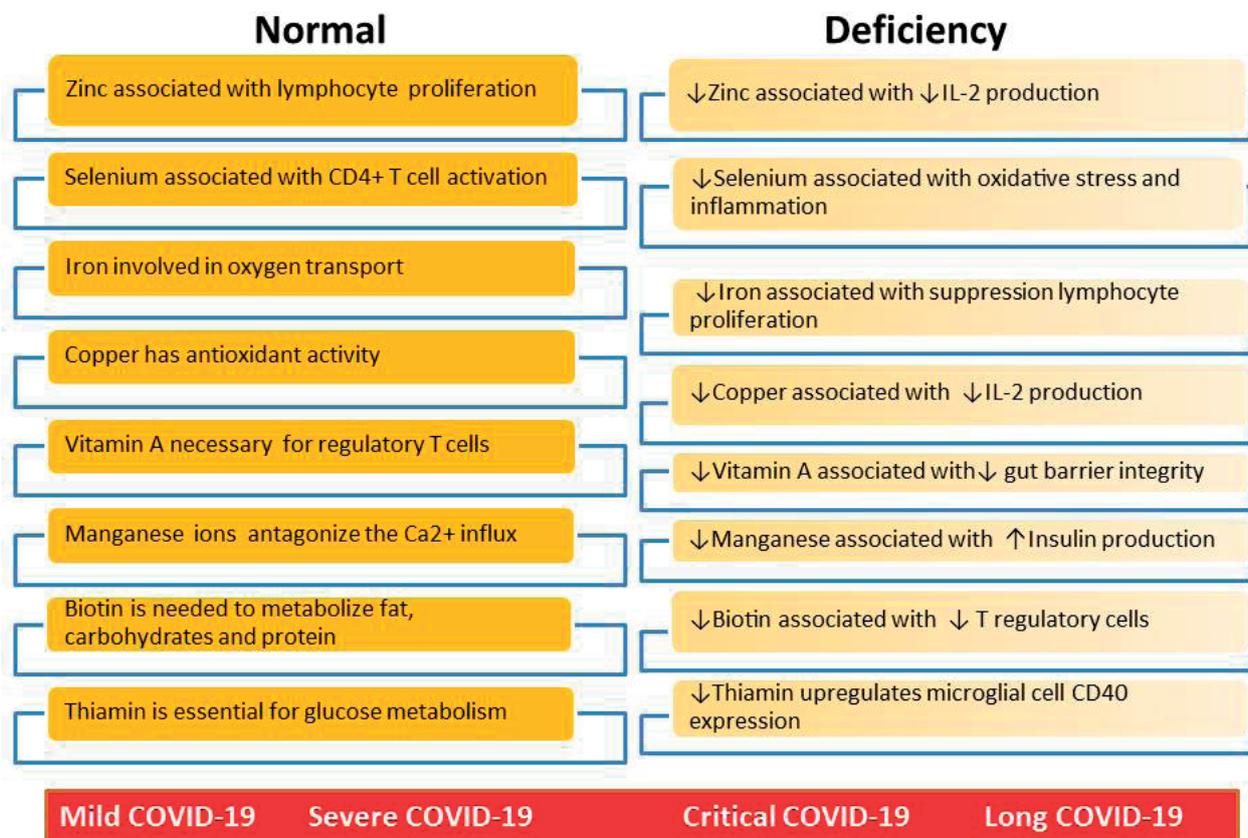


Figure 1. Micronutrient deficiencies correlate with critical COVID-19 and long COVID-19

Study limitation and future directions.

According to the European Association of Clinical Microbiology, 45% of antibiotics prescribed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been unsubstantiated. The use of multiple antibiotics leads to the development of antimicrobial resistance and disruption of intestinal microbiota. Disruption of the gut microbiome can lead to irritable bowel syndrome and psychological disorders, such as depression, adjustment disorders, and anxiety. However, potentiating negative impact of irrational antibiotic therapy on the development of long COVID-19 syndrome is still unknown. Thus, complex micronutrient testing and gastrointestinal microbiota investigation will lead to better health care management of long COVID-19.

Abbreviations Used:

- GSH - glutathione
- GSSG - glutathione disulfide
- NAD/NADH - nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide
- NADP/NADPH – nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
- ATP/ADP/AMP – adenosine triphosphate/ adenosine diphosphate/ adenosine monophosphate
- CD40 – cluster of differentiation 40
- T2DM – type 2 diabetes
- HTN – hypertension
- IBD – inflammatory bowel disease
- DNA – deoxyribonucleic acid
- TAG – triglycerides

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