

Covid-19 survivors have an increased risk of contracting other illnesses

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Well-known KwaZulu-Natal epidemiologist, Professor Salim Abdool Karim, said studies show that people who have had Covid-19 are at an increased risk of having heart attacks, diabetes and mental health disorders.

Karim was speaking at a discussion held yesterday online, where he presented his views on the leadership required in the management of communicable diseases and the future prognosis.

Karim said different studies conducted post-Covid-19 have revealed increased risks of heart attacks, diabetes and mental health disorders in people who contracted the virus in the past.

“Post-acute Covid-19 patients had an increased risk of new diabetes diagnoses.”

He said the long-term impact of Covid-19 on heart disease included a 50% increased risk for people who had had the virus suffering from strokes, heart attacks and myocardi-

tis a year post-transmission.

He added that clinical studies showed that the effects of Covid-19 on mental disorders was that the brain size decreases and people were less able to complete complex tasks.

“People who had Covid-19 are at risk of long-Covid and this has an impact on work functionality; we are finding that people feel too tired and, in many cases, drop out of work.”

He said the biggest issue was that there were no universal checks and tests to prove that someone had

long-Covid; however, it can be diagnosed based on an individual's medical history in comparison to their developed illnesses after Covid-19.

“We don't have tests to check if one has long-Covid. We don't know what causes it.”

“An idea we have is that the virus may still exist in people — there are studies supporting that.”

Karim advised anyone who had Covid-19 in the past to visit a doctor to test for the above illnesses.

The professor said society had to

live smartly with the virus as it was not going anywhere.

“In order to live alongside Covid-19 you have to ensure that you are fully vaccinated, know the level of your community's transmission, do as much as you can outdoors where the risk is low, avoid poorly ventilated spaces and do what you can to protect others, not just yourself.”

Karim said, in South Africa, waves were no longer predictable, mainly because of the different levels of immunity.