

# Prevalence and Determinants of Acute Stress Disorder Among COVID-19 Survivors During the Pandemic's Final Phase: A Cross-Sectional Study in Seven Major Chinese Cities

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Acute stress disorder (ASD) is commonly observed among individuals who have been infected with COVID-19 (PEIC) and may progress to post-traumatic stress disorder. Following the relaxation of COVID-19 control measures in China during November/December 2022, the infection rate surged rapidly, leading to significant uncertainty and stress. There is limited knowledge about ASD during the final phase of the pandemic. This study explores the potential personal cognitive/emotional and environmental factors associated with ASD.

**Method:** A cross-sectional study was carried out among 5,545 individuals aged 18-60 years who had been infected with COVID-19 (PEIC) from December 27, 2022, to January 9, 2023, residing in seven cities across China. The 5-item Chinese version of the Primary Care PTSD Screen was utilized to evaluate ASD. Multiple logistic regression analyses were conducted to identify factors associated with ASD.

**Results:** The prevalence of ASD was 21.2%. After adjusting for background variables, several significant risk factors were identified. Personal cognitive risk factors included the severity of COVID-19 infection, a high perceived risk of reinfection, and a perceived lack of natural immunity. Emotional risk factors encompassed concerns about long-term physical harm and panic over the infection of elderly or young family members. Environmental risk factors involved difficulties in accessing information and medical supplies, having unvaccinated elderly or young family members, and having significant others experiencing severe COVID-19 symptoms.

**Conclusions:** The prevalence of ASD among individuals PEIC was significant. It is crucial to identify those at high risk of developing ASD and offer them appropriate care and early interventions to prevent further deterioration. Programs aimed at addressing ASD may benefit from targeting the risk factors identified in this study.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, China, Acute stress disorder, perceptions, emotions, risk factors