

Introduction

Although poliomyelitis is no longer a threat in the industrialised world, the past decade has seen an increase in the interest in this disease as many survivors have acknowledged new symptoms, including fatigue, weakness and pain, which are often debilitating and having a significant impact on the individual's daily functioning and quality of life. These symptoms, which can arise in an individual years after their recovery from their initial episode of polio, are commonly referred to as the "Late Effects of Polio".

General practice is most often the first point of contact with health care for members of the community. As a result, the General Practitioner (GP) has a major role in managing the health of their patients. GPs act as gatekeepers for their patients to access the rest of the health care system.

To provide quality of care to patients experiencing symptoms related to the late effects of polio, it is essential that health professionals be aware of the diagnosis of this condition and have an understanding of the underlying aetiology and pathophysiology of the symptoms.

The primary aim of this manual is to present contemporary concepts for the assessment, diagnosis, and management of the patient with a history of polio. It endeavours to assist the GP to make decisions regarding treatment and care, and to provide suggestions for the appropriate time to seek advice from specialists and allied health professionals in the management of their patients. A multidisciplinary approach to the assessment and management of these patients is often necessary due to the complex range of symptoms that these patients may experience.

This manual is divided into several sections:

- Acute Poliomyelitis
- Late Effects of Polio
- Clinical Features of the Late Effects of Polio
- Assessment
- Management
- The Role of the General Practitioner in the Management of the Late Effects of Polio
- Resources

Although the information included in this manual has been carefully reviewed, it is only a general guide. Management decisions should only be made subject to the clinician's judgement in each individual case. No responsibility is accepted by the authors for adverse outcomes resulting from clients or clinicians acting on the recommendations contained in this manual.