

MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Is the Royal Australian College of GPs harming patients?**

An [article in the Australian Journal of General Practice](#) criticises the Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) for recommending a therapy that harms up to 75% of patients. Peak patient body Emerge reports that some patients experience irreparable harm.

In a [dismissive response](#), the RACGP discounted multiple research studies reporting harm as “bias”. Patient groups have reacted with anger and outrage. “I’ve read that in clinical practice, ‘the care of your patient is meant to be your primary concern’. But that’s not what I see here. The RACGP seems more concerned about justifying themselves than in adapting to provide better care. In continuing to promote graded exercise therapy, they are harming people with ME/CFS like me,” said Sarah from Canberra.

Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) is a severe neurological disorder that compromises the ability of 500,000 Australians to work, enjoy leisure activities or perform self care. The disease affects almost 2% of Australians, making it as common as cancer, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. ME/CFS disproportionately affects women.

Half of long COVID sufferers have ME/CFS, which is usually contracted after an infection.

The RACGP believes that ME/CFS can be cured with graded exercise therapy. Graded exercise therapy supporters assert that ME/CFS is simple deconditioning, caused by a psychological fear of exercise. But recent discoveries of numerous genetic, metabolic, mitochondrial, circulatory, immunological, neurological, cellular and structural abnormalities in ME/CFS patients make mockery of that belief. It appears that ME/CFS patients have been gaslighted.

The defining feature of ME/CFS is post-exertional symptom exacerbation – an exertion intolerance that causes prolonged symptom flares lasting days, weeks, months or even years. Flares cause incapacitating cognitive problems, increased pain, and gut, sleep, immunological and neurological disturbances. They can be brought on by physical exercise, as well as cognitive, social or emotional exertion. Yet, nonsensically, the RACGP recommends graded exercise therapy for ME/CFS. Graded exercise therapy is contraindicated in the US and the UK. It's time for the RACGP to follow suit.

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**Politicians who have spoken out about the problems with graded exercise therapy in ME/CFS:**

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