Coronavirus heart threat: 10-to-30 percent of those hospitalized end up with ‘molecular damage’

More than six months into the global pandemic, studies have shown that COVID-19 can not only exacerbate existing heart problems, but could also potentially cause new ones, causing experts to question whether the cardiac impacts of the virus may outlast the infection itself.

While not conclusive, case reports of long-term heart problems following COVID-19 infection are beginning to surface, including one from a New York City critical care physician who had mild symptoms of coronavirus but was later diagnosed with new heart disease.

“I started to feel like my heart was racing and I couldn’t run around like I always do and I had trouble catching my breath,” Dr. Janet Shapiro told NBC New York. It turned out she’d developed cardiomyopathy, a condition in which the heart struggles to pump blood to the rest of the body.

By peering into the cells of COVID-19 patients, scientist are finding, according to an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association, that approximately 10-30% of people hospitalized with the virus show molecular evidence of new cardiac injury.

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Experts like [cardiologist Raul] Mitrani are speculating that long-term heart damage might manifest in unexpected ways, potentially through scar tissue accumulation in the heart, and are highlighting “post-COVID-19 cardiac syndrome” as an important area for future research.

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