

## Mystery of how COVID-19 ravages the brain deepens

That SARS-CoV-2, the culprit of the COVID-19 pandemic, is also associated with neurological symptoms isn't entirely surprising, given [some evidence](#) that its close relatives, MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-1, have been associated with neurological symptoms too. But the proportion of patients developing such symptoms—and their mounting collective numbers—has startled some scientists.

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As this cohort grows, so too does the global effort to investigate how SARS-CoV-2 causes such symptoms. The picture so far remains somewhat puzzling. Autopsy studies—which have been limited—have found clear signs of damage in dozens of brains of COVID-19 patients. Although traces of the virus have been reported in some brain specimens, in many cases it is nowhere to be found. While the question of whether SARS-CoV-2 directly infects the brain remains unresolved, researchers are exploring other mechanisms whereby it could affect the human brain.

“I think all of us probably . . . would agree that there is no overwhelming infection of the brain,” notes Avindra Nath, a neurovirologist at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. “If there is, it's a very, very miniscule amount. That cannot explain the pathology that we see. It has to be something more than that.”

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