Meet the women who described, named, and brought long COVID into the light

A British historian, an Italian archaeologist and an American preschool teacher have never met in person, but they share a prominent pandemic bond.

Plagued by eerily similar symptoms, the three women are credited with describing, naming and helping bring long COVID into the public's consciousness in early 2020.

Rachel Pope, of Liverpool, took to Twitter in late March 2020 to describe her bedeviling symptoms, then unnamed, after a coronavirus infection. Elisa Perego in Italy first used the term "long COVID," in a May tweet that year. Amy Watson in Portland, Oregon, got inspiration in naming her Facebook support group from the trucker cap she'd been wearing, and "long hauler" soon became part of the pandemic lexicon.

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Pope, 46, started chronicling what she was experiencing in March 2020: flu-like symptoms, then her lungs, heart and joints were affected. After a month she started having some "OK" days, but symptoms persisted.

She and some similarly ill colleagues connected with Perego on Twitter. "We started sort of coming together because it was literally the only place where we could do that," Pope said. "In 2020, we would joke that we'd get together for Christmas and have a party," Pope said. "Then obviously it went on, and I think we stopped joking."

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