

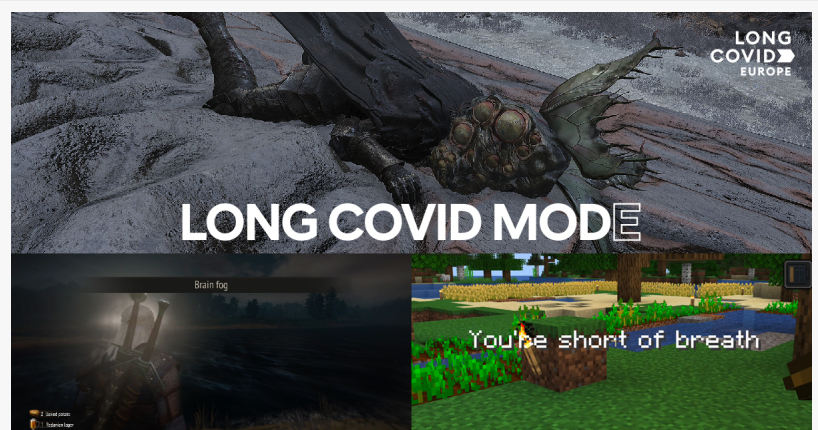
Long COVID Europe and Saint Elmo's give Long COVID symptoms to gaming characters

The initiative raises awareness by turning the lived, real-world symptoms into in-game effects in the worlds of Elden Ring, Minecraft and The Witcher 3.

MUNICH, BAVARIA, GERMANY, May 31, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Even though COVID-19 as a global health emergency was declared over at the beginning of May, it does not mean that it has disappeared. People around the world are still affected by its long-term effects. Currently, an estimated 100 million people are affected by Long COVID, and this number continues to grow. As diagnostic and therapeutic options are currently inadequate, many of them could suffer from health limitations for the rest of their lives.

The common misconception is that Long COVID only affects older age groups or people with previous health conditions. But it can affect everybody including children and adolescents. Despite this, not many people know about this debilitating condition and fail to relate to the hardships faced by patients. To raise awareness, especially among a younger audience, Saint Elmo's and the Long COVID Europe patient network have launched a campaign using the world's most popular single player games.

"The challenges presented by an invisible condition like Long COVID pushed us to find novel means to show people, who have never experienced this debilitating condition, what it really



Long COVID Mode uses gaming modifications, commonly known as 'mods' within the gaming community, to give gaming characters typical Long COVID symptoms.



Real-world symptoms turn into in-game status effects.

feels like to live it. Long COVID forces us to face new levels of difficulty every day. Gamers love new challenges in their favourite games. We simply connected these dots to create a vivid simulation of a life with Long COVID” states Ann Li, Co-chair, Long COVID Europe.

About Long COVID Mode

Long COVID Mode uses gaming modifications, commonly known as ‘mods’ within the gaming community, to give gaming characters typical Long COVID symptoms. Mods are usually

created by fans of a game rather than the game developer. They are created by editing the code of the game to add new content or modify the existing content of the game.

Long COVID Mode adds a layer of difficulty to life in the game, something Long COVID patients are dealing with in reality. With the help of some of the most prominent modders, LCE and Saint Elmo’s have created the Long COVID Mode for Elden Ring, Minecraft and The Witcher 3.

Real-world symptoms turn into in-game status effects:

Long COVID Mode shows a player how life may take on a whole new level of difficulty when somebody is suffering from Long COVID. While fatigue and cognitive dysfunction are more commonly associated with the long-term effects of COVID-19, these mods also manage to highlight some of the lesser-known symptoms like exertion intolerance, post-exertional malaise (PEM), unrefreshing sleep, indigestion and more. This is how some of these translate in the gaming worlds.

Occasionally, the player will suffer from one of the following random symptoms:

Exertion Intolerance: You are forced to stop for 3-5 seconds.

Blackouts: Your vision fades, leaving you confused.

Losing track of time: Time passes without you noticing.

Weak Memory: You lose a items from your inventory.

Indigestion: Healing might hurt instead of regeneration.

Post-Exertion Malaise (PEM): You feel immensely drained and get stunned for a few seconds.

Always-active symptoms include the following effects:

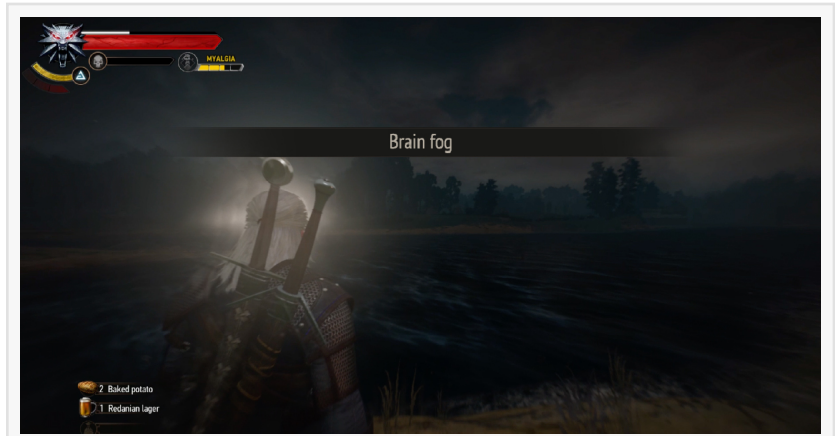
Fatigue: All movements are 25% slower.

Exhaustion: Your stamina regeneration in combat is much slower.

Cognitive Dysfunction: Hitting targets with spells and arrows becomes much harder.

Joint pain: Using charged attacks or repeated actions hurt you.

Unsatisfying rest: You cannot rest without interruptions and getting up from resting places takes



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longer.

Choosing the right games:

They all are vast, open world and massively loved, but each of Elden Ring, Minecraft and The Witcher 3 commands a unique set of fans. Their contrasting PG ratings also make it easier to reach out to both a younger and a matured audience. Elden Ring, the bestselling game of 2022, is also the most-quit game owing to how punishing it is for new players. But the challenge is what makes Elden Ring the global sensation that it is. Long COVID Mode takes this challenge to the next level.

"As gaming has become the most popular form of entertainment, overtaking film and TV, what better way to really show the impact of Long COVID than trying to beat Elden Ring, the notoriously difficult game of the year, while suffering from the same symptoms in-game. I think this is such a poignant demonstration of the real problems people face, and a great way of spreading the message" adds Perri Karyal, Gaming Content Creator, Elden Ring Challenge Runner.

Boasting of over 176 million players every month, Minecraft is the best possible interpretation of how life can be in a virtual world. This enables Long COVID Europe to create the most realistic description of a day in the life of Long COVID patients. The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is the highest-rated open-world RPG in gaming. The character's cognitive functions, referred to as the Witcher Senses, play an important part in the game. Having those affected makes the path of the Witcher a tough one to tread.

Using gaming as a medium of education:

For LCE, reaching a younger set of audience was the primary reason to turn to gaming. While their patients often share research papers and testimonials, they seldom feel their message heard outside the health sector.

Another reason for choosing gaming as a medium is that campaigning for Long COVID is difficult because it forces many of the patients to remain housebound, which makes them invisible. The virtual world of games helped them overcome those physical limitations and geographical boundaries. Using this innovative channel allowed them to spread their message across the globe without having to leave their homes.

Matthias Harbeck, Chief Creative Officer, Saint Elmo's, further adds: "Like Long COVID, games have no geographical boundaries. Long COVID Mode can be experienced in any corner of the world and replicated for any number of games. It feels like a fantastic medium to create awareness for such a complex and important issue."

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