

# Rare neurological condition linked to COVID-19 cases in 21 countries

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A colorized scanning electron micrograph of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Credit: NIAID

As researchers continue to study the neurological impacts of COVID-19, a Houston Methodist international collaboration has documented an unexpectedly frequent occurrence of acute transverse myelitis

(ATM)—inflammation of the spinal cord—in 43 COVID-19 patients.

Led by Houston Methodist neurologist Dr. Gustavo Roman, the study of existing scientific literature found that patients from 21 countries developed spinal cord lesions after contracting the virus. Symptoms included paralysis and sphincter/bowel dysfunction.

The patients ages ranged from 21 to 73 and included about half-and-half women and men. ATM, a rare neurological condition, affects between 1.34 and 4.6 cases per million per year, and researchers believe the unusually high rate in post-COVID-19 patients merits additional investigation. Moreover, 3 ATM cases were reported during the trials of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine.

The study is published in *Frontiers in Immunology*.

Dr. Roman collaborated with researchers from Hospital Paitilla, Interamerican University of Panama and Hospital Santo Tomas (Drs. Fernando Gracia, Antonio Torres, Alexis Palacios, Karla Gracia and Diogenes Harris).

**More information:** Gustavo C. Román et al, Acute Transverse Myelitis (ATM):Clinical Review of 43 Patients With COVID-19-Associated ATM and 3 Post-Vaccination ATM Serious Adverse Events With the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 Vaccine (AZD1222), *Frontiers in Immunology* (2021). [DOI: 10.3389/fimmu.2021.653786](https://doi.org/10.3389/fimmu.2021.653786)

Provided by Houston Methodist

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