

## Fatigue isn't the same as post-exertional malaise (PEM) May 2026

We, the undersigned clinicians, researchers and community leaders, call for urgent action to improve recognition of post-exertional malaise (PEM) in myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), long COVID and its impact on related energy-limiting chronic conditions.

**PEM is not ordinary fatigue.** It is a clinically significant worsening of symptoms after physical, cognitive, emotional or orthostatic activity, and can result in serious symptom exacerbation, functional decline and, for some, lasting loss of health and quality of life capacity.

When PEM is missed or misunderstood, patients may be given advice or subjected to expectations that worsen their condition, their multimorbidity, and cause avoidable harm.

**Earlier recognition of PEM is essential for safer care and better outcomes,** limiting or slowing the impacts of ME/CFS and long COVID. Approaches must be evidence-informed, individualised, and responsive to the fluctuating nature of these conditions.

**We call on healthcare providers, educators, employers and policymakers to adopt PEM-aware approaches that reflect the reality and risks associated with PEM.**

**PEM is real. It is serious. And it must not be made worse by misunderstanding.**

Sincerely,

**Dr Chris Armstrong**, University of Melbourne  
**Dr Lucinda Bateman**, Founder MD, Chief Medical Officer, Bateman Horne Centre of Excellence  
**Bloom**, Ambassador Emerge Australia, living with ME/CFS  
**Eliza Charley**, Ambassador Emerge Australia  
**Mark Clisby**, Chair Emerge Australia  
**Emeritus Professor Lawrence Cram AM**, Australian National University  
**Dr Mark Donohoe**, Founder, Director Mosman Integrative Medicine  
**Simone Eyssens**, Research Director Emerge Australia  
**Emeritus Professor Paul Fisher**, Chair Emerge Australia Medical and Scientific Advisory Committee, former Head of Microbiology, Department of Physiology, Anatomy, and Microbiology, La Trobe University  
**Emeritus Professor Andy Gleadow AO FAA**, University of Melbourne  
**Emerita Professor Ros Gleadow FAA**, Monash University  
**Kate Herbert**, Nurse Educator Emerge Australia

**Professor David Putrino**, Ambassador Emerge Australia, Director Rehabilitation Innovation Icahn School of Medicine Mount Sinai, New York  
**Dr Richard Schloeffel OAM** (retired), former Medical Director Emerge Australia  
**Professor Peter Schofield AO FAHMS PhD DSc**, Chair of the Mason Foundation National Medical Advisory Panel  
**Lily Schubert**, Ambassador Emerge Australia, living with ME/CFS  
**Adjunct Professor Sophie Scott OAM**, Ambassador Emerge Australia  
**Associate Professor Bernard Shiu**, Clinical Director Geelong Long COVID Clinic  
**Dr Steven Sommer**, former GP, living with ME/CFS  
**Tracey Spicer AM**, Ambassador Emerge Australia  
**Emeritus Professor Annette Street, PhD**, La Trobe University  
**Dr Michelle Tavoletti**, Research Manager Emerge Australia  
**Dr Emma Tippett**, Long COVID Specialist Clinic Nineteen

# Emerge Australia's Clinical Education for Clinicians

Advancing ME/CFS and long COVID understanding together

Early diagnosis of ME/CFS or long COVID helps reduce the risk of deterioration, enables vital referrals, and provides clarity for patients and their families.

Our courses are thoughtfully structured to support healthcare professionals.

In all our sessions, we ensure that post-exertional malaise (PEM) is central to any diagnosis and management decisions, ensuring you centre this critical symptom in all of your clinical decision making and care.



## FLEXIBLE

Self-paced modules designed to accommodate busy clinical schedules



## EASY ACCESS

24/7 online platform with pause-and-resume functionality and mobile friendly



## PROFESSIONAL

RACGP approved content developed by leading ME/CFS specialists



1800 865 321  
[www.emerge.org.au](http://www.emerge.org.au)

