

# Neurological Disorders and Stroke

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## **Prolonged disorders of consciousness: The assessment and therapy pathway**

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The management of patients in a prolonged disorder of consciousness state is complex and most recent guidelines recommend that these patients are managed in a specialized unit by a specialist multi-disciplinary team. The Prolonged Disorders of Consciousness (PdoC) Unit at the Wellington Hospital was created according to these guidelines, to diagnose and treat patients with prolonged disorders of consciousness, aiming to optimize their care and management before discharge. The assessment and therapy pathway and its implementation will be presented including the internationally recommended assessment tools used. The processes for keeping the family involved and informed about diagnosis and prognosis, with advice about possible key decisions such as long-term care and the appropriateness of life-sustaining measures including antibiotics and resuscitation will also be highlighted. Functional imaging research has indicated that a sizeable proportion of patients (17-19 percent) diagnosed as lacking awareness with behavioral diagnostic tools are in fact aware. A program of research and clinical assessment of level of consciousness is planned, utilizing functional imaging techniques (fMRI and EEG) in order to identify these patients. The ethical implications of this will be discussed.

### **Biography**

Antonio Incisa Della Rocchetta has completed his PhD in 1990 at McGill University, Montreal Canada. He is the Lead Neuropsychologist at the Unit for Prolonged Disorders of Consciousness Wellington Hospital, London. He has published in many international peer-reviewed journals and has been in clinical practice for over 20 years.

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