

FALCON correspondence

August 23, 2026 | Redacted public copy prepared October 13, 2026

Prepared from the original email messages in Robert DeRosa's inbox. This is a reformatted transcript, not an image of the original email. Email addresses have been redacted from the displayed headers; Robert DeRosa's telephone number and personal email address are redacted in his signature. Message routing and security headers, automated external-sender notices and the duplicate quoted original message are omitted. Later forwarding and journalist correspondence are excluded. The substantive wording, including original spelling, is retained; line wrapping and spacing are normalized.

Dr. Jason Busse's response

From: Jason Walter Busse [REDACTED: email address]

To: Robert DeRosa [REDACTED: email address]

Cc: Dena Zeraatkar [REDACTED: email address]

Date: August 23, 2026, 11:27:13 a.m. EDT (15:27:13 UTC)

Subject: RE: 1,291-signature FALCON petition — response requested before recruitment

Hi Robert.

Thanks for your email.

As with any trial that we embark on, we have no plans to begin until we receive ethics approval.

We have registered the trial with the essential details of the protocol (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT07697261>), and are certainly open to publishing a more detailed report. I will raise this with the study team (e.g., can we cover the costs of publication). We always publish a detailed statistical analysis plan (SAP) before undertaking the analyses, and typically upload this to the trial registry.

As you are aware, long COVID has no objective biomarkers, and is defined by subjective symptoms. This is why core outcome sets for long COVID focus on subjective symptoms (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9197249/>).

Total funding supporting the trial at present is \$188 904, awarded through a competitive grant from the Hamilton Academic Health Sciences Organization (HAHSO).

We plan on paying therapists that provide either pacing or the lighting process their typical hourly rate.

We always disclose any conflicts of interest that may be relevant to studies as part of the publication process.

We do have patient partners as team members, who have reviewed the protocol; however, we do not expect them to represent all people living with long COVID (which is why they are partners and not representatives).

Best Regards,

Jason

Original request from Robert DeRosa

From: Robert DeRosa [REDACTED: email address]

To: Jason Walter Busse [REDACTED: email address]

Date: August 23, 2026, 5:55:34 a.m. EDT (09:55:34 UTC)

Subject: 1,291-signature FALCON petition — response requested before recruitment

Dear Dr. Busse,

I am writing as the Long COVID patient advocate who started the petition concerning the planned FALCON trial. As of August 23, 1,291 verified supporters had signed the request that recruitment not begin until an independent scientific, ethical and patient-led review has addressed the study's design, participant protections and transparency.

As the trial's responsible investigator, you are best placed to answer the study-specific questions at the centre of the petition. Before recruitment begins, will you publish the full protocol and statistical analysis plan; explain why the registered efficacy outcomes do not include an objective activity or performance endpoint; disclose the total funding, practitioner payments, licensing or materials arrangements and relevant conflicts; and publish the operational procedures for detecting post-exertional worsening, deterioration, withdrawal, stopping and escalation of care?

The petition also asks how people living with Long COVID were involved in choosing the intervention, outcomes and protections, and how participant materials and practitioner conduct will distinguish psychological support from a claim to treat the underlying illness.

Please confirm receipt by Tuesday, August 25, and advise who will coordinate a response. I would appreciate a substantive written response by Tuesday, September 1, 2026, or an indication of when one can be expected. If any factual premise is incorrect, please identify it and provide the relevant public document so I can correct the record.

Thank you,

Robert DeRosa, Long COVID patient advocate [REDACTED: telephone number] [REDACTED: email address]

Petition: <https://www.change.org/p/long-covid-patients-deserve-better-pause-mcmaster-s-falcon-lightning-process-trial>