Long COVID cases among children and pediatric death toll rise globally

Linda Rios
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In the wake of the reopening of economies and public institutions the world over, the COVID- 19 pandemic continues to cross national borders, continually driving the spread of new and more virulent strains of the disease. With more than 194 million people having been infected worldwide, the most vulnerable populations include children and adolescents.

According to the organization Long COVID Kids, over 40 children a day in the UK are being hospitalized with COVID-19, as the Delta variant has come to dominate. There has been a huge surge in the number of children becoming infected. New data shows that a growing number of children who have tested positive for the disease have gone on to develop Long COVID, with symptoms lasting beyond 12 weeks. So far, in the UK alone, 33,000 children ages 2–16 and 71,000 young people ages 17–24 are suffering from Long COVID.

Dr. Deepti Gurdasani, an epidemiologist and senior lecturer for Queen Mary University of London, recently wrote an article on the Long COVID Kids site, pointing to two studies: the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data study and the REACT-1 (Real-time Assessment for Community Transmission) data study for the evidence of Long COVID in children and young adults. He states that anywhere between 10 percent and 50 percent of those infected with coronavirus suffer from Long COVID symptoms.

The ONS study found that 13.7 percent of participants continued to experience symptoms past 12 weeks after initial infection. And of 400,000 who reported suffering from Long COVID, 9,000 are children. Gurdasani notes that for many children, their symptoms are not mild, but affect their lives in profound ways. Many of the children have not been able to return to some of their favorite activities.

In the UK, the estimate is between one in seven or eight children have contracted COVID, or over 1 million children, and children's hospitals are beginning to fill up quickly. In addition to new cases, some children who have been living with Long COVID have been readmitted to hospitals due to relapses in their health.

Three children featured on the Long COVID Kids site had to be admitted after serious relapses in their health, including the daughter of the founder, who contracted Long COVID after having tested positive for COVID-19 in March 2020. In many of these instances, doctors cannot explain the reasons for the relapse and many of the tests ordered by doctors come back negative.

In Indonesia, more than 100 children a week have died from COVID 19, the majority of whom were younger than five years of age, discrediting the myth that COVID-19 is of little consequence to young children. According to the *New York Times*, this represents a mortality rate for children much higher than any other country, and an infection rate for children of 12.5 percent. In southeast Asia, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Vietnam have also seen a record number of coronavirus cases and deaths among children.

India experienced a similar increase in cases of COVID-19 in children in May and June, as the coronavirus overran the country. One newborn tested positive for COVID-19 only 12 hours after birth, even though the mother had recovered from the disease prior to giving birth.

Additionally, more than 2,000 children so far have developed MIS-C (Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome), a condition characterized by significant levels of inflammation in the major organs, including the heart, lungs, and brain, which can be life-

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threatening for some children. MIS-C is a complication resulting anywhere between two to six weeks after initial COVID-19 infection or contact with a person who had COVID-19. The vast majority of children who develop MIS-C are asymptomatic, or experience mild symptoms.

In the United States alone, over 4 million children have contracted the virus, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, representing 14.1 percent of all cases nationwide at the time the study was conducted. Not only is this likely an undercount, but states differ wildly in how they choose to report new COVID-19 infections, further obscuring the situation. Meanwhile, several states are recording increases in the number of COVID-19 cases they are seeing in children. Florida has seen an 87 percent rise in cases over the past week in children under 12. Hawaii has seen 188 cases of COVID-19 in kids 18 and younger, and in Alabama there have been 22 hospitalizations.

While countries are busy blurring statistics and throwing open businesses and schools, sending parents back to work in an effort to revive the economy, their children are being rushed back into crowded classrooms, becoming vectors for the continued spread of the disease, either among themselves or transmitting it back into their homes.

Dr. Niraj Patel, Chief of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Disease and Immunology at Levine Children's Hospital, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and chair of the American College of Allergy Asthma and Immunology COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, told *healthline.com* on Thursday that in the United States there have been 4,087,916 cases of COVID-19 in children and a total of 10,628 deaths. Patel also noted that the number of cases of pediatric COVID-19 is rising. Given the fact that between 10-15 percent of all children who contract the virus suffer from Long COVID, this also means that anywhere between 408,000 to 613,000 children are likely suffering from Long COVID in the US alone.

Adding further dimension to this global tragedy, a study last week in *The Lancet* reported that 1.5 million children worldwide have lost a parent, grandparent or caregiver due to COVID-19.

The numbers are astonishing and criminal, given the fact that the lie has been perpetuated by the ruling classes throughout the world that children are not affected by COVID-19. Across the globe the number of children suffering Long COVID is in the millions. The long-term implications to the developing bodies and minds of an entire generation of youth remain unknown, but what is clear is that all the resources, science and technology exist to halt the virus. This can only be accomplished on the basis of a fight by the working class throughout the world for a socialist reorganization of society.

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