As schools begin to reopen nation-wide

New study reveals potentially “life-altering” neurologic complications in children hospitalized with COVID-19

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A new study released last week in Pediatrics, a peer-reviewed medical journal published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, revealed that about 8 percent of children hospitalized with COVID-19 at major pediatric hospitals in the United States experienced a neurologic complication of some kind, even if they were otherwise healthy.

The shocking information revealed in the study emerges just days before school districts across the US reopen their doors to tens of millions of students, teachers and other school staff for fully in-person learning. The reopening is a critical aspect of the Biden administration’s “forever COVID” policy and has the full backing of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

The study, “COVID-19 and Acute Neurologic Complications in Children,” was based on data from 15,000 children hospitalized with COVID-19 in 52 children’s hospitals over a two-year period. Tragically, it is one of only a small handful of studies that has been conducted on the long-term impact of COVID-19 on children.

Neurologic complications are defined in this case as having a diagnosis of encephalopathy, encephalitis, aseptic meningitis, febrile seizure, non-febrile seizure, brain abscess and bacterial meningitis and cerebral infarction.

Encephalopathy is a broad term for any brain disease that alters brain function or structure. Declining ability to reason and concentrate, memory loss, personality change, seizures and twitching are common symptoms. Encephalitis is inflammation of the active tissues of the brain. The inflammation causes the brain to swell, which can lead to headaches, stiff neck, sensitivity to light, mental confusion and seizures.

The study found that 3.84 percent of the children in the study experienced febrile seizures, 2.33 percent experienced non-febrile seizures, 2.19 percent experienced encephalopathy, 0.17 percent experienced aseptic meningitis, 0.13 percent experienced encephalitis, and 0.13 percent experienced brain abscess and bacterial meningitis.

If one takes into account the officially reported figures of 148,555 child hospitalizations, according to the CDC, there have likely been roughly 3,120 cases of encephalopathy, 5,650 febrile seizures, 2,510 cases of brain abscess and bacterial meningitis and 2,510 cases of encephalitis.

In total, over 10,000 children may have experienced neurological complications, just in the United States alone. Extrapolated globally, this number rises to hundreds of thousands of children with potentially life-altering neurological complications. That is, the reckless “let it rip” policies enacted by governments around the world have not only led to the deaths of millions of elderly and working-age adults, as well as thousands of children, but has also caused pain and suffering for hundreds of thousands of children and their families for years to come.

The analysts found that 75 percent of children who had a neurologic complication did not have an underlying neurologic comorbidity, and 60 percent of the same group were otherwise healthy.

These figures are damning in their own right. They are even more alarming when one takes into account the widely held belief that the official figures are significantly lower than the reality. One can only imagine what scientists would find if they had access to all the available data, not only from child hospitalizations but from all reported cases.

In a press release on August 11, co-author James W. Antoon, MD, PhD, MPH, an assistant professor of pediatrics and hospital medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, described the potential impact on children affected, noting, “the complications are almost uniformly associated with worse outcomes and can be life-altering conditions.

“As we found in our study, COVID-related complications
can have a significant impact on the lives of children,”
Antoon told Healio in an interview last week. “With the
emergence of new, highly contagious variants, the potential
patients that are at risk is growing.”

All serious scientific evidence points to the same basic
conclusion: Forcing schools to reopen for in-person learning
is needlessly placing the lives and well-being of millions of
children and workers at serious risk.

In fact, at the beginning of August the CDC itself released
a study on the effects of COVID-19 on children which found
that those previously infected with coronavirus were at
substantially greater risk for developing multiple life-
threatening conditions, including acute pulmonary
embolism, myocarditis and cardiomyopathy, venous
thromboembolic events, acute renal failure and Type 1
diabetes, in addition to debilitating symptoms, such as smell
and taste disturbances, circulatory problems, fatigue and
pain.

Despite the overwhelming scientific evidence, the CDC
issued new guidelines for COVID-19 last week which
remove or reduce recommendations for quarantine, isolation
and testing of exposed and infected individuals. They are the
latest in a long series of anti-scientific policies from the
agency and conveniently come just as the school year is set
to begin.

The CDC’s latest changes to its guidelines mark a
deepening of the Biden administration’s “forever COVID”
policy that has been forced on the American population.
This criminal policy, which amounts to the embrace of
former President Donald Trump’s “herd immunity”
strategy, has been supported by the entire political
establishment.

Notably, this includes the so-called “left” representative
Senator Bernie Sanders. On the same day the new CDC
guidelines were released, Sanders interviewed White House
COVID-19 Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha, who
demanded that schools remain open, stating, “We should
look forward to a school year in which every child is in
school, in person, full-time, for the whole year. I think we
have all the ability to do that, and that should be the only
acceptable standard.” When Sanders made the preposterous
claim that “children … are not dying” of COVID-19, Jha did
not correct him. According to the CDC, 1,747 children have
officially died of COVID-19 in the US, while the real figure
is undoubtedly above 2,000.

While Sanders, Biden and all the rest downplay the
significance of COVID-19 and lie about its impact on
children, the scientific evidence against their claims
continues to mount.

Moreover, there is every reason to believe that the
reopening of schools this year could be even more
catastrophic than previous years. The US is currently in the
midst of a months-long wave of four different Omicron
subvariants, with the most dangerous BA.5 subvariant now
dominant.

Over the past three months, an average of over 100,000
people have officially been infected each day, with the real
figure between half a million and 1 million, while the seven-
day average of daily new deaths has once again surpassed
500.

Unlike last year, when the drastic spike in child cases and
hospitalizations emerged largely as a result of school
reopenings, this year schools are reopening in the midst of a
major wave of the virus and an increase in child cases and
hospitalizations. This summer alone, over 200 children have
officially died from the virus, and child hospitalizations have
recently reached the same levels as during the height of the
Delta wave last September.

Moreover, virtually no measures are being taken to contain
the unprecedented global outbreak of monkeypox, which has
already infected over 11,000 Americans, including at least
eight children.

There is no constituency in the ruling class on either side
of the aisle that is willing or able to fight for policies based
on science and reason to protect the lives of children and
workers against COVID-19. In order to put an end to the
pandemic and save lives, a mass movement of the working
class must be organized in opposition to the Democratic
Party and outside of the control of the pro-corporate trade
union apparatus.

The WSWS is working to build such a movement through
the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File
Committees (IWA-RFC). We urge all parents, workers and
youth who are interested in joining this fight to fill out the
form below to get in touch with us.