

Italy abandoning all COVID mitigation measures

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Even as the Italian state reports 15,617 new COVID cases over the 30-day period ended August 2, including 76 deaths and 415 infections among healthcare workers, the ultra-right government headed by Giorgia Meloni of the fascist Fratelli d'Italia is dropping mandatory isolation for COVID positive patients, thus virtually ending all COVID mitigations by early next month.

Since early 2022, the Italian government, first under the banker Mario Draghi and now under the fascist Meloni, has been systematically dropping COVID mitigations, first by drastically reducing the isolation period for positive patients, then by letting the requirement for masks in public spaces, including healthcare facilities and public transport, expire, and dropping mandatory vaccinations for workers, including healthcare employees. The only remaining measure, smart working from home for workers classified as medically fragile, is due to expire on 31 December this year.

Effectively admitting that government policy has no connection to science, Italy's undersecretary for health, Andrea Costa told RAI Italian state radio, 'The government's goal has always been to create the conditions for co-existence with the Covid-19 virus.' In other words, the government is adopting a forever-COVID policy.

More than 26 million COVID cases have been officially reported in Italy since January 2020; however, this is a drastic undercount since the government abandoned its comprehensive testing and tracking infrastructure in early 2022, and the real toll of the ongoing pandemic is not known, leaving the population flying blind and vulnerable to death and chronic disease.

Since declaring an end to the pandemic in March

2022, the government has sought to downplay the risks of contracting the virus; however, principled scientists continue to raise the alarm, especially regarding the effects of repeated infections and Long COVID.

As an indication of the prevalence of Long COVID, a recent Italian scientific study among children infected with COVID, published in the Italian *Journal of Pediatrics*, found that among the study cohort, 24.3 percent of children who recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection without need of hospitalization suffered Long COVID, a debilitating condition that can last for weeks, months, or years and involves a wide range of organs, including the heart, lungs, brain, blood vessels, and gastrointestinal tract.

The Italian study estimates that the probability of children developing Long COVID-19 increases with the severity of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection, with the study's pediatric cohort showing the prevalence of Long COVID increasing from 11.5 percent in asymptomatic children to 46.5 percent in children with symptomatic infection, to 58 percent in hospitalized children.

The study also shows that being symptomatic during the SARS-CoV-2 infection increased six-fold the risk of children having at least one symptom of Long COVID-19, particularly respiratory, neurological, and psychological symptoms, with the study concluding, "the putative explanations for these Long COVID-19 symptoms include viral protein persistence in epithelial reservoirs, persistence of low-level inflammation, mitochondrial dysfunction, and virus-induced dysautonomia..."

Alarmingly, the study also confirmed that "hospitalized children showed high prevalence of cardiac involvement (approximately 22 percent) and above all psychological symptoms (approximately 37

percent): anxiety, fear in social relationships, depression, insomnia, and concentration difficulties,” and that “gender and pre-existing diseases do not affect the occurrence of Long COVID-19; also, children without comorbidities can have a severe course for Long COVID-19 symptoms.”

The study is an indictment of the Italian government as the authors highlight the fact that, “for many months after the breakout of the pandemic, parents’ worries about their children’s symptoms were minimized, often labelled as ‘psychological issues.’” The study demonstrates that Long COVID-19 is a reality in pediatric age and can strike patients with mild or no acute symptoms and can potentially cause lifelong health problems.

In a 2022 interview with *la Repubblica*, Professor of Medical Hygiene Walter Ricciardi said that research shows more than four million Italians of all ages are suffering from Long COVID, sometimes for more than one year after infection, with pulmonary, heart and kidney problems being the most frequent and serious complications reported.

Long COVID continues to be a major global concern among principled scientists who characterize the response of governments to the pandemic as a mass disabling event.

As in other nations that have dismantled COVID monitoring and mitigation, scientists in Italy are using wastewater testing to keep the public informed of the state of the pandemic and to track new and evolving variants.

Samples taken in October 2022 detected the highly transmissible Omicron strains BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 before they were reported in clinical cases as well as other subvariants that have not yet been sequenced. The study authors urge the Italian state to optimize sequencing strategies in wastewater and integrate environmental with clinical surveillance to help the early discovery of less abundant SARS-CoV-2 lineages and complement public health surveillance. With the government policy of forever COVID, this will not happen, and the pandemic will continue to kill and maim indiscriminately.

The newest variant, Eris, is spreading like wildfire in the Basilicata region of Italy and the Italian media, in sheer indifference to public health, is spreading misinformation that “it is as harmless as the flu,” even

as COVID is proven to mutate and spread more than twice as fast as the flu and kill at a much higher rate.



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