



## **A COMMUNITY SEMINAR ON INTRODUCING THE EMERGENCY OF COVID-19 IN CHILDREN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Covid-19 virus infection has spread rapidly worldwide, making it the first pandemic of the 21st century to have caused many deaths (more than 2 million people died). Some shreds of evidence from a range of sources suggest that the rate of Covid-19 cases in children is relatively low, commonly have asymptomatic or mild symptoms, and have low mortality rates. Data released by the Indonesian Pediatrician Association (IDAI) regarding the mortality rate of children infected with Covid-19 is 42% are infants under one year of age. In addition, there are new reports of severe and life-threatening cases of Covid-19 complication in children, which occur 4-6 weeks after infection, known as Multisystem Inflammatory Disease in Children (MIS-C). In order to control the spreading of Covid-19 infection in children, many countries considered temporarily closing the school. However, in September 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia decided to reopen the school. Schools that provide face-to-face learning for students are schools located in yellow zones or moderate-risk areas. In order to reopen the school safely, the children, teachers, and parents have to obey some strict safety protocols. Even though physically reopening schools might potentially increase the transmission in the community. Due to anticipate the increase in morbidity and mortality, it is very important to increase public knowledge about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in children.

Keywords: Covid-19 in Children, SARS-CoV-2

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Initially, epidemiology reports that the rate of Covid-19 infection in children is relatively low, and published data focused on adults. On the first wave of Covid-19, children were rarely tested for the virus infection. However, as Covid-19 testing became more available to use, the studies and reports about the impacts of the virus on children are more accessible. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, the Covid-19 cases in children have reached more than 1.9 million cases among children 5-11 years of age from March 2020 to November 2021.<sup>1</sup> WHO reported the distribution of covid-19 cases in children based on age groups; 1.8% of global cases were children under five years of age, 6.3% were 5 to 14 years of age, 14.5% were children 15 to 24 years of age.<sup>2</sup>

### **Covid-19 in Children**

The children population have fewer and milder symptoms of Covid-19 infection than the adult. The mechanism for age-related differences in severity of SARS-CoV-2 infection in ways that are still under study. However, several hypotheses connected the difference of immune system's functioning and maturity in children and adults.<sup>3</sup> In April 2020, life-threatening cases of Covid-19 in children were first recognized in the United Kingdom, which is termed MIS-C. Multisystem Inflammatory Disease in Children (MIS-C) is a severe life-threatening complication of SARS-CoV-2 infection in children 4-6 weeks after infection. MIS-C events usually appear after the outbreak of adult Covid-19 cases in a certain area. The prevalence of MIS-C has been estimated at 2/100.000 children.<sup>4</sup>

### **Closure and Reopening Schools in Covid-19 Situation**

As the increasing cases of Covid-19 infection in children and severe cases were started being reported, the government in many countries had to close schools for around a year since 2020. Some studies reported that school closure was temporally associated with a reduction of Covid-19 incidence and mortality.<sup>5</sup> Now, we have entered the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore the government and policymakers considered recovering the education sector by reopening the school. UNICEF reported emerging evidence that children's ability to learn was being stalled, children's ability to read, write, do basic math was badly affected.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in September 2021, The Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia had to choose to reopen the school with a face-to-face learning method. The government is allowing the school to open face-to-face meetings if the school is in the yellow zone or moderate-risk area, and the school may obey strict safety protocols.

WHO and UNICEF had urged all schools over the world to reopen for recovering the education sector safely. On the other hand, reopening the school with face-to-face learning has drawn comments and criticism from the teachers, pediatricians, and parents. Face-to-



face learning might increase the risk of exposure to Covid-19 infection. It is because the student can physically contact other students unintentionally, or some of the students do not obey the school's pandemic protocols, poor presentation of symptoms among children make the detection of Covid-19 case is complicated. Moreover, the vaccine program is not evenly distributed in schools. Therefore, the appropriate measure of Covid-19 prevention is what all the students, parents, and teachers need to know. They have to understand what symptoms children could have if they are infected by SARS-CoV-2, what the alarm symptoms are indicated the children should be treated immediately in a hospital, the urgency of vaccination in children, and the awareness to obey all of the school pandemic protocols.

## **METHODS**

Clinicians should have the role of promoting the prevention of Covid-19 infection in schools. Therefore, a community seminar was held by pediatricians and general practitioners on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The seminar was a service community that aimed to inform teenagers and adults about preventive actions facing the Covid-19 situation. The speakers were a pediatrician from RSUP, Dr. Mohammad Hoesin Palembang. They gave information about the alarm symptoms of Covid-19 in children, what should be prepared for quarantine and self-isolation, and the importance of vaccination in children. The seminar was held in collaboration with the vaccination program in SMPN 9 & 10 Palembang. The participants of the seminar were all of the students, parents, and also the teachers. The community team also prepared a questionnaire to evaluate students' understanding and souvenirs for students who successfully answered the speaker's question.

## **Discussion**

The community seminar was running well, and the participants got enthusiastic about the content of the seminar. We collected 36 questionnaires that the students have filled. Their average score was 62. Though it may indicate that the students still have a low level of understanding about Covid-19 prevention, we hoped that the parents who joined the seminar had a higher understanding and could teach their children. The information given was crucial and needed for parents to know.



Picture 1.



Picture 2



Picture 3





**Picture 4**

Note: **Picture 1** dr. Indra Saputra, Sp.A(K), M.Kes as the speaker in community seminar in SMPN 10 Palembang; **Picture 2** dr. Desti Handayani, Sp.A(K), M.Kes as the speaker in SMPN 9 Palembang; **Picture 3** dr. Silvia Triratna, Sp.A(K) as the chairman of IDAI Sumsel opened the seminar.



**Picture 5**

A student demonstrated how to wash hands according to WHO's guideline.



**Picture 6**

The community team collected a questionnaire



## CONCLUSION

The world has faced unprecedented global health issues caused by SARS-CoV-2 since 2019. We have entered the second year of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and are unsure when it will end. The effects of the school reopening on the transmission of Covid-19 infection are conflicting. The most crucial thing to get done now is promoting information about how to implement the preventive measure to decrease the transmission of Covid-19 while the school keeps open. Having a community seminar is one of the best approaches to giving parents and children information to get ready for school.

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