

**International Forum**  
**Friday 11 February 2022**  
**Brief Readout**

**Summary**

- This session featured a presentation and discussion, led by colleagues from Israel, on COVID-19 variants and their impact on children, with further contributions from other partner countries.

**Israel**

- Preliminary reports indicate that some children are suffering from neurological conditions associated with the Omicron variant of Covid-19.

***Covid policies for children: Reason and analysis***

- Israel provided an overview of relevant variables/unique “Human Phenomena”:
  - Cellular makeup (fewer ACEII receptors under av. Age of 9)
  - Immune system
  - ‘Ware and tare’ (existing conditions/vulnerabilities different in children compared to adults)
  - Behaviour
  - Long-term effects
  - Psychological vulnerability to distancing policies
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- Covid-19 Specific:
  - Asymptomatic (children more asymptomatic, but observed decrease in this)
  - Lower risk of severity
  - PIMS (MIS-C)

***Covid policies for children***

- Israel provided an overview of relevant variables for Covid-19 in children:
  - Risk assessment:
    - For children
    - For at risk population in contact
  - Risk assessment factors:
    - Hospitalisation by age
    - Rate of infection by age
  - Protection policies:
    - Testing and isolation intensity

- Vaccines
- Social distancing
- Likelihood of success of health behaviour change

### ***Demographics***

- Israel's demographics mean that the share of children in the country is twice as large as many other partner countries – at 28%. Israel also has other demographic risk factors associated with children – including family size and average class size, amongst others.
- Israel currently has a two-week testing mandate in schools, but isolation policies have been relaxed similarly to other countries
- Analysing data from South Africa, they have noticed an overall decrease in cases, but a distinct and dramatic increase in infections among younger age groups.

### ***Clinical perspective***

- Around two-thirds of children hospitalised with Covid-19 are cases where children have been hospitalised for another reason but have tested positive while in hospital.
- Israel has a strong ambulance system which may have helped to avoid high levels of hospitalisations in children compared to other countries.
- Israel has observed a rise in PIMS (Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome) cases among younger children, but it appears to be that the number of cases of PIMS per positive case of Covid-19 in children is reducing.
- Also, cases appear to be resolving more quickly.
- Israel has seen a small rise in post-Covid neurological manifestations. This may be due to increased awareness or may be cause and effect.

### **Japan**

- Cases have reached around 100k, four-five times higher than the previous wave.
- The number of cases in younger people has been increasing, and this hasn't been seen to the same extent in previous waves. Around 30% of cases are in people under 20 years old.

### **Singapore**

- The country is currently amid an Omicron surge, with an increase in cases among younger people, and neurological complications similarly to Israel.



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

### Switzerland

- Increase in cases, but no increase in hospitalisation in children, and cannot yet confirm any increase in neurological conditions in children related to Covid-19.

**If you wish to attend the fortnightly meeting of the International Forum, please contact the secretariat at**

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