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Children must not be lumped with vax burden

Children have already paid too high a price in this pandemic, it's incumbent on adults to protect themselves, not put that burden on kids.



[Rita Panahi](#)

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The median age of Covid-19 deaths in Australia is 86, higher than the average life expectancy. Despite the relentless scaremongering from politicians and the media about the number of youngsters infected with the Delta variant, and the drive to vaccinate children as young as five, the virus remains one that disproportionately impacts the very old, the very ill and the morbidly obese.

Sacrificing the wellbeing of the young to save the very old may have made sense if “two weeks to flatten the curve” was something other than a cruel joke.

But what we've done is rob the voiceless of close to two years of their childhood, saddled them with a mental health crisis, mountainous debt that will take decades to pay off and stunted their social and academic progress in a futile attempt to “eradicate” a virus.

Large-scale studies from the UK and the US have shown that healthy children have little to fear from Covid-19, and now there is local data to reassure parents scared silly by the alarmist rhetoric.

The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance report shows that 98 per cent of children infected with Covid-19 in Australia have no symptoms or only mild symptoms.

NCRIS director Professor Kristine Macartney explained that the majority of children in hospital with Covid are admitted for social, not medical, reasons, such as their parents being too unwell to care for them.

“This really affirms what we know about the Delta virus. We’ve seen a higher rate overall of spread from the Delta virus compared to what we saw last year but in children in particular, the majority of children who have become infected have not had symptoms or had only mild symptoms and this is certainly the case for the children infected in educational centres, as well.”

From the start of the pandemic renowned infectious disease and public health experts warned against locking down the young and healthy as a mean of controlling Covid-19 when a targeted response could provide protection to those at-risk without unduly harming the wider community.

But the voices of those advocating a centrist position, including Harvard Medical School professor Martin Kulldorff, Stanford University professor of medicine Jay Bhattacharya and Oxford University infectious disease epidemiologist Professor Sunetra Gupta, were maligned or ignored.

And now we are again drowning out the voices of experts cautioning against needlessly vaccinating healthy children at no serious risk from coronavirus.

The UK’s Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation decided against universal vaccines for healthy 12 to 15 year olds earlier this month.

JCVI member and professor of paediatrics Adam Finn explained that “there is very little benefit” to vaccinating healthy 12 to 15 year olds against Covid.

“We know that these vaccines work, they do prevent the disease but we also know that healthy children aged 12 to 15 very seldom get seriously ill with Covid and, in that situation, the fact that there are side effects, albeit very rare, which we don’t really understand at this point, means that there is a risk that we could be doing more harm than good with the vaccine,” he said.

“We really do want to take care that we avoid a scenario, a theoretical scenario, where a vaccine program is seen to be doing more harm than good.”

But this week the UK’s four chief medical officers effectively overruled the independent expert advisory committee, and all 12 to 15 year olds will be offered one Pfizer jab.

Clearly the CMOs were untroubled by a study released last week that showed healthy boys are six times more likely to suffer from heart problems from a Covid jab than be admitted to hospital because of Covid itself.

The study by US researchers, led by epidemiologist Dr Tracy Hoeg, examined the incidence of cardiac myocarditis in children who had received Covid vaccines in the first six months of 2021.

And, yet the push to vaccinate children continues. Los Angeles has become the first major school district in the US to mandate vaccines for all children aged 12 and over, meaning students must be jabbed to attend class.

In Australia we have already approved double jabs for that age group and there is a plan to vaccinate children as young as five.

Pfizer is seeking regulatory approval to roll out the vaccine for children of primary school age.

Missing is any discussion about the ethics of vaccinating healthy children against a virus that is largely harmless for them, particularly when the vaccine comes with a small but identifiable risk.

Now, some may argue that vaccinating preppies is for the greater societal good, but I would contend that children have already paid too high a price during this pandemic and it's incumbent upon adults to protect themselves by being fully vaccinated.

We cannot put that burden on children.

IN SHORT

We have entered new realms of crazy when a former columnist tweets about the vaccination status of the Prime Minister's daughter. Mike Carlton tweeted on Monday: "It'd be interesting to know if Morrison's elder daughter Abigail is vaccinated. She is 14." What a bizarre and creepy post.



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