

Clinical Characteristics of Children With COVID-19: A Multicenter Study in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

Background Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) has infected over 20 million people globally. The first confirmed case in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was reported on 29th January 2020. To date there is no published data about COVID-19 infection among children in the Arabian region. Objective To describe the epidemiologic, clinical and laboratory characteristics of children hospitalized with COVID-19 infection in Dubai, UAE Methods A cross-sectional multicentre study of children with confirmed COVID-19 infection admitted between March 1st and June 15th, 2020 to three large hospitals in Dubai, UAE. Their demographics, clinical characteristics and inpatient hospital course were investigated. Results 111 children were included in our study and represented 22 nationalities. Fifty-nine (53.2%) were boys. The mean age was 7 years, with 15.3% younger than 1 year. At presentation 43 (38.7%) were asymptomatic, 68 (61.2%) had mild or moderate symptoms and none had severe symptoms. Fever, cough and rhinorrhoea were common presenting symptoms and resolved by day 5 of hospitalization. Most of our patients had no abnormality on chest x-ray. The most common laboratory abnormalities on admission included variations in neutrophil count (24.7%), aspartate transaminase (22.5%), alkaline phosphatase (36.7%) and lactate dehydrogenase (42.5%). COVID-19 PCR turned negative at a median of 10 days after first positive. There was no significant difference to time of negative PCR between symptomatic and asymptomatic children. Conclusion A large percentage of children with COVID19 experience no symptoms, and severe disease is uncommon in the UAE. Ongoing surveillance and contact tracing will be important to contain future outbreaks.

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