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PERSISTENT SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN ADMITTED WITH COVID SIMILAR TO CONTROLS 1 YEAR LATER

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BACKGROUND

The aim of this study was to describe the prevalence of persistent COVID/disease in hospitalized pediatric population one year after admission compared to a control group.

METHODS

Prospective observational study conducted in 2 hospitals. We included patients aged 0-18 years hospitalised for acute COVID-19 more than a year ago and controls, matched by age and sex, hospitalised for causes other than COVID-19, and who had never COVID-19 at recruitment or during the follow-up. Families were contacted and a standardised survey was conducted. Persistent COVID/disease was defined as the presence of symptoms with onset in the first 3 months after COVID-19 and with persistence for more than 2 months.

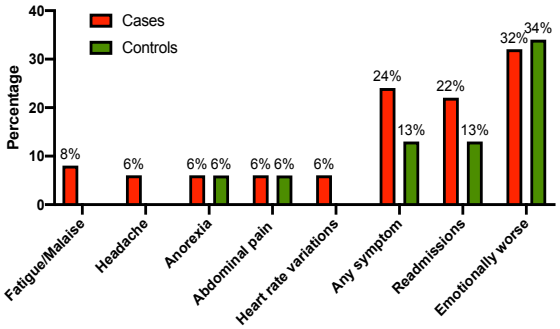


Fig 1 **Persistent disease 1 year after acute disease**

Persistent symptoms were not significantly different in children hospitalized for acute COVID-19 compared to children hospitalized for other reasons

RESULTS

50 cases and 46 controls were analysed, 58.3% male, 36% ≤5 years. Families were interviewed a median of 1.89 years (interquartile range; 1.25-2.07) after hospitalisation. The definition of persistent COVID-19/disease was met in 34% of cases vs. 37% of controls (p=0.767). Symptoms persisted >=11 months in 24% (12/50) of cases vs. 13% (6/46) (p=0.182), with no differences by age group. The most frequent symptoms at 1 year in cases were fatigue (8%), headache (6%), poor appetite (6%), abdominal pain (6%) and variations in heart rate (6%). In controls, these were abdominal pain (6%) and poor appetite (6%). The number of readmissions was 11/50 (22%) and 6/46 (13%) (p=0.267), respectively. On emotional/behavioural items, 16/50 (32%) of cases reported that their emotional state was worse or much worse than before admission, compared to 16/46 (34.7%) (Fig 1). No risk factors associated with the development of persistent symptoms were found, except the length of hospital admission (p=0.043).

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the prevalence of persistent symptoms was not different in patients with and without COVID-19. 1-year persistence was higher in COVID-19 cases but did not reach significance. Persistence correlated with length of hospitalization.

ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMATION

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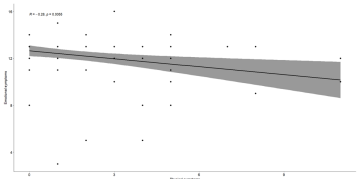


Figure 2.Correlation between number of emotional symptoms and physical symptoms