

**LETTER**DERMATOLOGIC
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COVID-19 in the pediatric population

Dear Editor,

On 30 January 2020, the *World Health Organization* (WHO) declared Coronavirus (CoV) disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic as a public health emergency. All age groups are susceptible to COVID-19. Pregnant women are at high risk of acquiring the infection possibly due to the immunologic changes of gestation. However, there is no evidence so far for severe outcomes for mothers. Premature delivery was reported in pregnant patients with COVID-19 but it was unclear whether it was related to the infection.¹⁻⁴

Three neonatal cases with COVID-19 have been reported. The first neonate was a 17-day-old baby diagnosed by the home caregiver; the second had fever at age 5 days, and the mother was a confirmed patient of COVID-19; the third was a newborn in an emergency cesarean section of a suspected maternal patient and the mother was diagnosed postpartum. The presence of COVID-19 vertical transmission to infant during delivery or breastfeeding remains to be confirmed.⁴

A study evaluated nine hospitalized infants infected with COVID-19. All had at least one infected family member in which the infant's infection occurred thereafter. None of them showed clinical progression requiring intensive care, corticotherapy, mechanical ventilation, or any severe complications.⁵ Interestingly, a study showed a high frequency (83.3%) of COVID-19 RNA detection and prolonged virus RNA shedding in feces of pediatric patients for more than 1 month. This highlights a likelihood of poor performance of current case definitions of COVID-19, especially in infants.⁶

Another study demonstrated that chest imaging alterations in infected children with COVID-19 might occur earlier than clinical symptoms and that allow early identification of the large underdiagnosed suspected pneumonia cases. Close observation is necessary for children with either mild symptomatic or asymptomatic infection. However, it should be combined with a detailed history and nucleic acid detection testing.⁷

Therapeutically, experts do not recommend the use of antiviral agents, or empirical antibiotics, for the treatment of self-limited non-severe cases due to lack of evidence regarding effectiveness of such therapies in the pediatric population.⁸

In conclusion, most of the pediatric patients with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, without fever or pneumonia, and will recover within 1-2 weeks after disease onset. No severe cases or deaths have been reported in pediatric patients. Suggested reasons for children being less susceptible to COVID-19 include a more active innate immune response and healthier respiratory tracts as they have not been exposed to cigarette smoke and air pollution as adults.⁹

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved by all the authors, that the requirements for authorship as stated earlier in this document have been met and that each author believes that the manuscript represents honest work.

Ayman Abdelmaksoud¹ George Kroupouzou^{2,3}Mohammad Jafferany⁴ Torello Lotti⁵ Roxanna Sadoughifar^{6,7}Mohamad Goldust^{8,9}

¹Mansoura Dermatology, Venerology and Leprology Hospital,
Mansoura, Egypt

²Department of Dermatology, Alpert Medical School of Brown University,
Providence, Rhode Island

³Department of Dermatology, Medical School of Jundiaí,
São Paulo, Brazil

⁴College of Medicine, Central Michigan University, Saginaw, Michigan

⁵University of Studies Guglielmo Marconi, Rome, Italy

⁶Bidarskincenter, Tehran, Iran

⁷University of Rome G. Marconi, Rome, Italy

⁸Department of Dermatology, University Medical Center Mainz,
Mainz, Germany

⁹Department of Dermatology, University Hospital Basel,
Basel, Switzerland

Correspondence

Mohamad Goldust, Department of Dermatology, University Medical
Center Mainz, Mainz, Germany.
Email: mgoldust@uni-mainz.de

ORCIDAyman Abdelmaksoud <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4848-959X>Mohammad Jafferany <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6358-9068>Torello Lotti <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0840-1936>Mohamad Goldust <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9615-1246>**REFERENCES**

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