

Webinar report

School re-openings in India: How confident can we be- insights from COVID -19 Data globally

The graphic features the title at the top, logos for the Foundation for People-centric Health Systems and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, and portraits of three speakers: Dr. Randeep Guleria, Dr. Madhuri Kanitkar, and Dr. Swati Ghate. Below this is a 'LIVE WEBINAR' section with a 'KEYNOTE SPEAKER' (Dr. Christopher J.L. Murray), a 'MODERATOR' (Reshika Baruha), a QR code, and the registration link. The bottom section displays logos of partner organizations including the Indian Institutes of Public Health, University of Washington, Rishikood University, and Aquity Global Inc., along with social media handles for FPHS India.

CCOVID-19 has affected populations of all age groups but the learning loss faced by children during this pandemic is immense. Recent surveys presented that only 10% of the children had some kind of education in the last 10 years. Keeping this fact in mind, this webinar was an important initiative to aware all key stakeholders of the need for re-opening schools.

On **15th November 2021**, a webinar on **“School re-openings in India: How confident can we be- Insights from COVID -19 data globally”**, was organized by the **Foundation of People-centric Health Systems** in collaboration with the **Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation**, **University of Washington** ,and other esteemed organizations. It was a live webinar organised on the Zoom platform from **7:30 to 9:00 pm** IST. The webinar was open to public and was conducted with an approach to make

people related to education and health sectors as well as parents of the school-going children aware of the facts affecting school re-opening

School re-openings in India: How confident can we be?
Insights from COVID-19 data globally

Monday, November 15, 2021; 19:30-21:00 IST

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Chris Murray, MD, DPhil
Director, Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) &
Professor and Chair of Health Metrics Sciences, University of Washington,

 Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation

 UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

 Indian Academy of Pediatrics

 COMHAD

 Foundation for People-centric Health Systems

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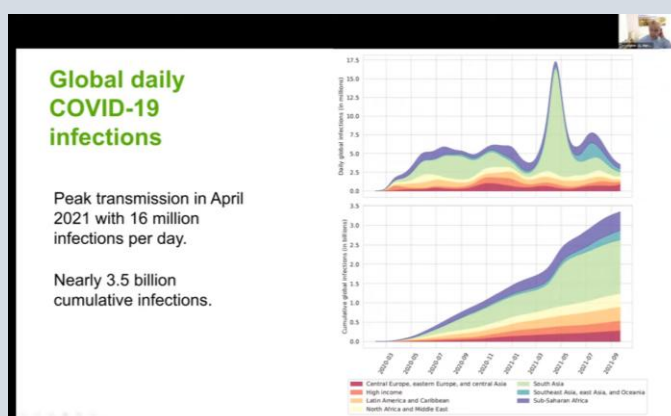
 PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION OF INDIA

 OSU CENTER FOR HEALTH SCIENCES

 AQUITY Global Inc.
Access and Quality through Innovations and Technology

The 1.5 hour webinar was opened up by **Dr. Neeraj Khar** and the rest of it was moderated by **Rishika Barua** who is Associate editor and Anchor with the NDTV channel. Further, Ms. Barua introduced the keynote speaker **Dr. Christopher JL. Murray, Director at Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), University of Washington**, and other dignified panalists: **Dr. Madhuri Kanitkar**, Vice-Chancellor, Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik, and **Dr. Swati Ghate**, Indian Academy of Pediatrics.

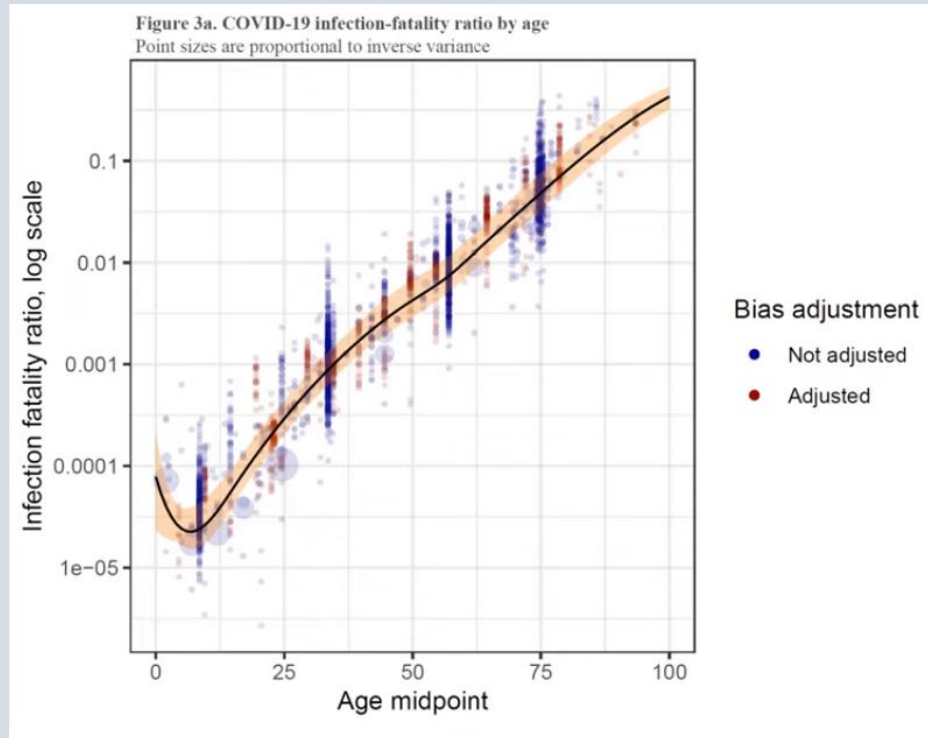
Dr. Christopher JL Murray began with a presentation on the statistical data about what was the “True impact of Covid-19 globally and in India”.



He reported that in June 2020, the global daily infection rate was 5 million/day which in **April 2021 reached 16 million/day** when the Delta wave hit the world. Further, he stressed upon the role of IHME in tracking states in India for Covid-19 related data which

showed that in the state of Maharashtra, the infection detection rate was 5% which was reasonably disturbing and one of the reasons for the same was little access to testing facilities.

Commenting on the age-specific case fatality rate due to Covid-19, the results of metanalysis done at the global level showed that in a graphical representation

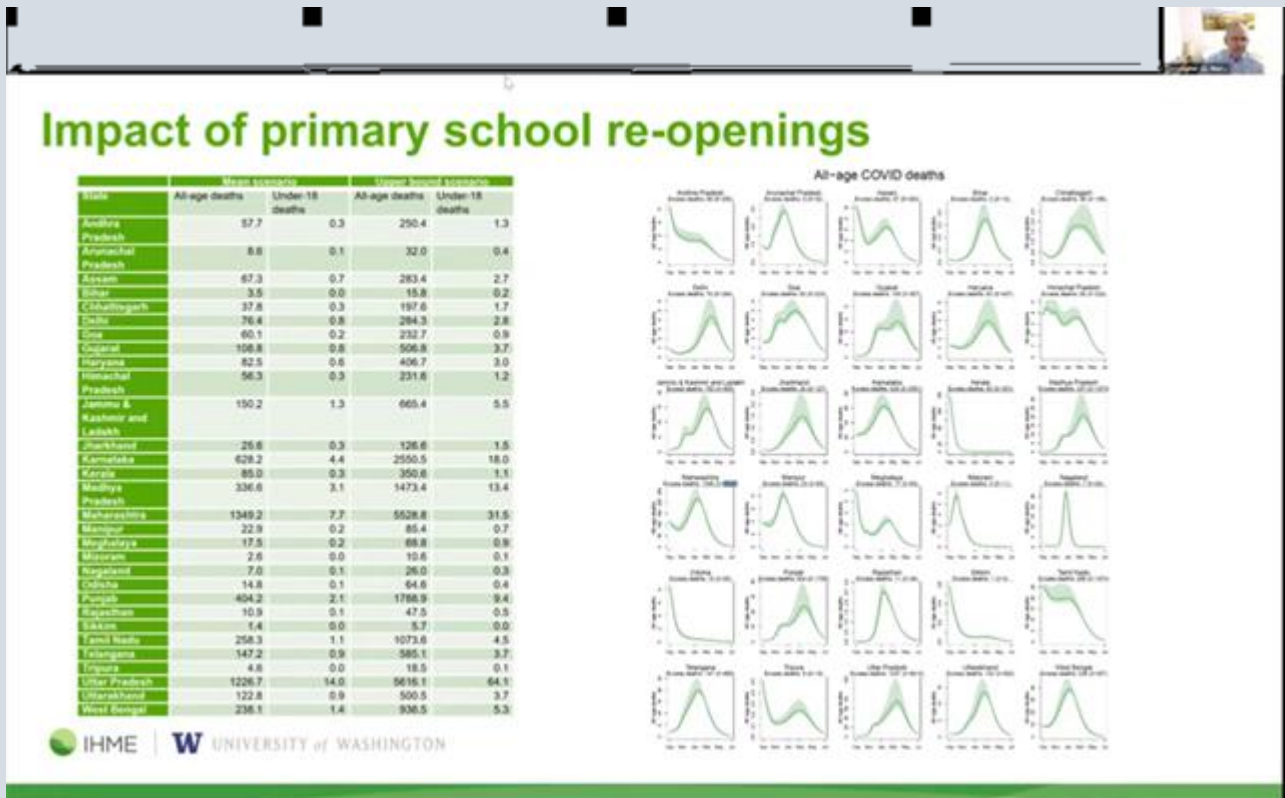


of the case in all global regions, there was a classic J shaped curve with the lowest deaths at age of 7 years which was the approximately 10000 times lower than deaths at age of 90 years. One year increase in age leads to 10 fold increase in case fatality rates.

To quantify the need for rehabilitation and support to help long Covid patients reintegrate into education or work, IHME also conducted a systematic review of 40 articles around the globe along with some other studies which showed that among the children only 13.3% of symptomatic cases suffered from long covid and needed hospitalization.

Talking about the impact of a various governmental decisions like lockdown on the mental health of children, he mentioned large proportion of children and facing social isolation and there is an increase in anxiety and depressive

disorders among them. Also, IHME did another study in which SEIR epidemiological model was applied incorporating various parameters to investigate the relation between transmission rates and school closure.



It showed that by primary school closure, there has been a small decrease in COVID-19 transmission intensity which is just 1.3%. So, if the natural immunity of the children is not waning, there is very little chance of high transmission among them and schools can be re-opened safely.

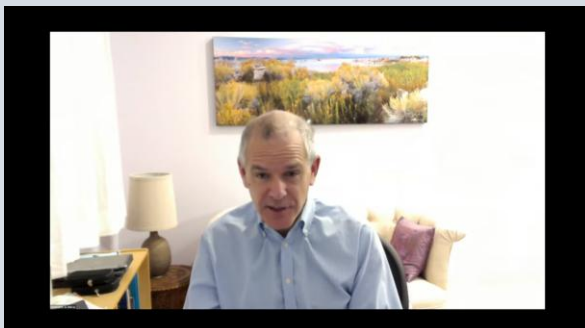
Panelists Dr. Kanetker and Dr. Ghate put their views in support of this finding by adding that due to school closure there is an impact on nutrition, complete physical development, and mental health of the children. Dr. Ghate added that in the last year there has been a 14% increase in suicidal rate among adolescents which is alarming. Also, IAP has come up with guidelines comprised of 3 sections: 1. General recommendations 2. Criteria for opening schools 3. Criteria for attending schools.



On asking about the reasons which lead to the withdrawal of children from school, Dr. Kanitkar mentioned joint family was a concern before delta wave was here but post

delta wave, there is huge seropositivity and vaccine coverage so need not worry that much. Dr. Ghate mentioned that worsened economic conditions of the families also lead to the same and the government's actions are needed in that aspect.

When Dr. Ghate was asked regarding the steps to inspire confidence in parents to put kids back to school, she advised to put up definitive criteria, involve parents in making decisions and vaccinate whole school staff at schools.



Dr. Murray on asking about the main reason behind the low risk of COVID-19 among children, listed age dependant expression of receptor

binding site and also immune function waning with age as some of the reasons.

He also pointed out that concerns by many parents, exposure of children to elderlies, and a lot of media on rare complications are the main reasons why many countries are introducing vaccination in children in spite of low risk.

The audience's queries were satisfied by Dr. Murray and other panelists. They emphasized implementing mask manners among children as well as adults and appreciated the effort by organizers to bring.

In closing comments, they advised that since Covid 19 has taught us a lot and the world is better prepared to deal with pandemics than ever before, we should come up with ideas to reintroduce normalcy among the people and expert plans for tackling future pandemics.

Resources:

Link to the webinar:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5SltV5c7_0&feature=youtu.be

Presentation:

<https://uconnect.academy/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/covid-19-INdia-risks-to-children-V4.pdf>

Acknowledgments

The Webinar organizers want to thank the following:

- Dr. Chris Murray
- Dr. Swati Ghate (Panelist)
- Dr. Madhuri Kantikar (Panelist)
- Ms. Rishika Barua (Moderator)

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- Dr. Anil Kaul
- Dr. Uday Bodhankar
- Dr. Yashwant Patil
- Dr. Piyush Gupta
- Dr. Dileep Mavalankar

Without their active support this webinar would not have been possible. In addition, we want to thank the following co-hosting organizations:

- Foundation for People-centric Health System
- The Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation and University of Washington
- Indian Institute of Public Health
- Indian Academy of Pediatrics
- COMHAD
- Oklahoma State University
- Rishi University
- AQUITY Global

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