



**COVID-19 IMMUNITY
TASK FORCE**

Research Roundup

Your weekly review on COVID-related research



Spotlight on CITF-funded Research

Increasing infection rates and emotional distress among children in Montreal

Dr. Kate Zinszer (Université de Montréal) and her EnCORE team, studying seroprevalence among Montreal children and adolescents, have released preliminary results based on data collected from an online questionnaire that parents out. These include updates on children's behaviour and emotional health, as well as many parental concerns. Most parents believed that vaccines will help stop the spread of COVID-19 and have indicated that they will likely vaccinate their child as soon as possible.

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Vancouver researchers develop a quantitative SARS-CoV-2 viral load test

A group of researchers at Simon Fraser University, the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and Providence Health care led by CITF-funded researcher Dr. Zabrina Brumme have developed a method to quantify SARS-CoV-2 virus levels in human biological specimens using a technique called droplet digital RT-PCR (RT-ddPCR).

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mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are shown to be highly effective after two doses against symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection and severe COVID-19 outcomes

Researchers from the Canadian Immunization Research Network (CIRN) assessed the effectiveness of mRNA vaccines against symptomatic COVID-19 infection and severe outcomes and showed promising results. In their pre-print, therefore not yet peer reviewed, researchers suggest that while one dose of the mRNA vaccine provides some protection that improves over time, two doses appear to be highly effective against severe outcomes. The study found that mRNA vaccines were effective against all circulating variants of concern at the time of analysis.

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Publications from our Experts

Willingness of Canadians to receive COVID-19 vaccines

CITF Leadership Group member Dr. Gina Ogilvie and VSRG Working Group member Dr. Manish Sadarangani have found, in a study published in *BMC Public Health*, that nearly 80% of British Columbians intend to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. That percentage does vary by race, gender, education, ethnicity and occupation.

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Poor antibody response to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for patients with chronic kidney disease

Patients with chronic kidney disease, including those on dialysis, have been prioritized for vaccination due to increased risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes such as hospitalization and death. This is an important population to study as these patients have a reduced immune response to infection and vaccination compared to health care worker controls and plasma from previously infected patients. In a recent preprint, not yet peer-reviewed, several CITF members report that hemodialysis patients produce poor antibody responses to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine compared to healthy controls.

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International Research Review

Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines appear safe for teens

Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are reporting that their mRNA COVID-19 vaccines appear to be safe and efficacious in 12- to 16-year-olds, consistent with results reported for adults. Safety and efficacy results of the Pfizer vaccine for this demographic were recently published in *New England Journal of Medicine*. Moderna announced their preliminary data in a press release.

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We are in this together: four strategies to right global vaccine inequity

In a *Science* commentary, journalists Jon Cohen and Kai Kupferschmidt highlight the ongoing health inequities in the global vaccine rollout while

laying out a roadmap for moving forward. The authors begin by exploring the moral and ethical argument of equitable vaccine delivery and quickly move to what we already know: none of us are safe until we are all safe. The authors then outline four ways in which sustained global vaccine coverage can be made a reality: commitments to COVAX; an increase in vaccine production; knowledge sharing; and an investment in building vaccine production facilities worldwide. As wealthy countries begin to gain control over COVID-19, lower income countries remain in the grips of the pandemic. How the global community chooses to act will have lasting implications for global health and security.

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Variants go Hellenic! WHO now using Greek letters as official names for COVID-19 variants

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently announced a new naming system for coronavirus variants using Greek alphabet letters. For example, the B.1.1.7 variant, first identified in the UK, is now designated as “Alpha” and the variant first identified in South Africa, B.1.351, will now be referred to as “Beta.”

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