



COVID-19 IMMUNITY
TASK FORCE

Research Roundup

Your weekly review on COVID-related research



CITF Events



Seminar Series Research Results & Implications



Thank you for making seminar #1 with CanCOVID a success!

On September 29th, nearly 350 people attended the first CITF/CanCOVID seminar of our monthly series. Six CITF-funded research teams focussed on SARS-CoV-2 infection and vaccine surveillance in children, their parents, and education workers, offered interim results. Thank you to all who were present and **a big thank you** to all our presenters: **Dr. Meghan Azad**, University of Manitoba, [CHILD Cohort Study](#); **Dr. Brenda Coleman**, Sinai Health System, [COVID-19 Education Study \(CCS-2\)](#); **Dr. Pascal Lavoie**,

University of British Columbia, [Tracking COVID-19 for Safer Schools](#); **Dr. Jonathon Maguire**, Unity Health Toronto, [TARGetKids!](#); **Dr. Manish Sadarangani**, University of British Columbia, [The SPRING Study](#); **Dr. Kate Zinszer**, Université de Montréal, [EnCORE Study](#); **Dr. Jim Kellner**, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Specialist, CITF Leadership Group member, CITF Pediatric Network Leader; **Dr. Timothy Evans**, CITF Executive Director; and our moderator **Dr. Upton Allen**, Professor, Paediatrics, University of Toronto, Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases, The Hospital for Sick Children.

[View presentation in pdf](#)



Thank you on behalf of the CITF and the Royal Society of Canada!

Yesterday, the CITF and the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) held a townhall for the Canadian public on back-to-school during COVID. A **big thank you** to CITF Leadership Group members **Dr. Jim Kellner** and **Dr. Caroline Quach** for being wonderful panelists, along with Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt and Dr. Curtis Brown, authors of a [recent policy briefing](#) from the RSC. The four talked about school and kids' safety during COVID, the plans for vaccines, and the cumulative impacts of the pandemic on the mental and social well-being of our children. A recording of the townhall will soon be available on our website.



Spotlight on CITF-funded Research

CITF Summary Report #1: Risks and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canada's kids, their parents, and teachers: Latest research results and policy implications

This summary report highlights the main takeaways from CITF/CanCOVID Seminar #1, focused on daycare, primary, and secondary school-aged children, their parents, and teachers. The **seven CITF-funded studies** involved reported interim results providing a snapshot of the pandemic's impact on the 2020-21 school year across Canada, both in terms of infection burden and the toll on mental health and social behaviours. The summary includes information about vaccine safety in children and discusses potential policy implications.

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mRNA vaccines administered with an extended interval between doses elicit strong SARS-CoV-2 antibody responses after two doses

Findings from a real-world vaccination study composed of seniors residing in long-term care facilities were recently released in preprint, therefore not yet peer-reviewed, on behalf of investigators from the CITF-funded study UNCoVER (including Dr. Donald Vinh, Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (RI-MUHC) and Dr. Marc-André Langlois, University of Ottawa) and the CITF Secretariat (Dr. Bruce Mazer, Associate Director, Strategy, affiliated with the MUHC). This study found both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines (or a mix-and-match of each) elicited similar antibody responses four weeks after the second dose.

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Study finds immune cells recognizing SARS-CoV-2 in tissue predating the pandemic

CITF-funded researchers Drs. Götz Ehrhardt and Mario Ostrowski from the University of Toronto set out to determine whether their pediatric tissue samples from 2015-16 contained signs of immunity to SARS-CoV-2. They discovered immune cells and antibodies in the tonsils that could specifically recognize the virus' spike protein. The study, published in *The Journal of Immunology*, provides some helpful insights as to why children are better adept at clearing SARS-CoV-2 infection.

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Researchers to study COVID-19 in the Orthodox Jewish Community of Montreal

The CITF is supporting a study that will investigate COVID-19 among the Orthodox Jewish community in the Montreal-area, which has been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The study is led by Dr. Peter Nugus and a team of experts from McGill University, in conjunction with community partner, the Refuah V'Chesed medical clinic.

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Pre-print to Published

'Made-in-Canada' assays perform well to measure seroprevalence

Despite the many assays available to test for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, a gold standard has not yet been established. In an article now published in *PLoS ONE*, CITF Testing Working Group members Dr. Anne-Claude Gingras from the University of Toronto, and Dr. Steven Drews from Canadian Blood

Services, evaluate multiple testing platforms and the concordance between test results. Percentage values in this published version differ slightly from the preprint.

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Publications from our Experts

Vaccine effectiveness of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines in British Columbia

Canada and other countries globally have authorized different SARS-CoV-2 vaccines, mostly based on findings from clinical trials which have demonstrated a high degree of efficacy against disease. However, the real-world effectiveness of these vaccines in an evolving pandemic with several variants needs to be better understood. In a recent pre-print (not yet peer-reviewed), the **VSRG**'s Vaccine Effectiveness Working Group member Dr. Danuta Skowronski, from the BC Centre for Disease Control, evaluated the single-dose effectiveness of vaccines authorized in Canada (Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca) during spring in British Columbia.

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Higher prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 infection among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

A recent pre-print (therefore, not yet peer-reviewed) led by CITF-funded researcher Dr. Stephen Hwang from the University of Toronto and Unity Health, explored the prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto during the first wave of the pandemic. The team observed that the overall prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 was higher among populations experiencing homelessness compared to the general

population and that the rates varied greatly between different sites serving this population, indicating the need for a multifaceted response strategy when addressing the needs of this community.

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International Research Review

How common is long COVID in the UK? The answer depends on how you measure it

Long COVID is an emerging phenomenon that is not yet fully understood or well defined. This technical article, recently released by *UK Office for National Statistics*, presents a range of prevalence estimates regarding the number of people who experience symptoms beyond the acute phase of COVID-19 infection, commonly referred to as "long COVID". Researchers indicate that long COVID may affect 3% to 12% of people with COVID-19 with estimates going as high as 7% to 18% when using a different estimation methodology. The variability in estimates is likely due to a lack of consensus in capturing and defining the full range of long COVID illnesses.

[Read more](#)

Will the pandemic go on indefinitely?

No, pandemics do not last forever. In this article published in *Immunity*, the authors provide a description of the epidemiological and immunological measures that underlie the transition from a pandemic state to an endemic state. Measures such as immune efficacy, disease prevalence, severity of disease, and age distribution all play a role in a disease becoming endemic.

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