RESEARCH BRIEF

COVID-19 In Children With Brain-Based Developmental Disabilities: A Rapid Review

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Current Situation

Prevalence of COVID-19 amongst children is reportedly low worldwide and its impact on their health mild.

However, little to no information is known regarding the potential impact of the virus on children with underlying conditions. Children with disabilities may have underlying health conditions that increase their risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

Concerned with the potential impact of COVID-19 on children with brain-based developmental disabilities, the SPOR-funded CHILD-BRIGHT Network commissioned a review of the topic.

What were the objectives?

We aimed to answer whether children with brain-based developmental disabilities were more likely to be infected by COVID-19 and have complications or poorer outcomes following infection.

How was the review conducted?

We conducted a two-week rapid review in close collaboration with a panel of knowledge users (patients, caregivers, clinicians, decision makers) and leaders from the CHILD-BRIGHT Network.

What did the review find?

We did not find any study that specifically addressed the impact of COVID-19 in children with brain-based developmental disabilities.

Four studies, three from China and one from the United States, reported a total of seven cases of infected children (0 to 12 months) considered at risk of developing a brain-based developmental disability.

Although three of the identifed children required pediatric intensive care, symptoms of COVID-19 were generally mild, most patients were discharged from the hospital and no deaths were reported.

What are the implications?

The current available information is not sufficient to inform practice or policymakers in light of the current pandemic situation and its impact on children with brain-based developmental disabilities.

There is an urgent need to further study current available data from public health agencies or health systems to assess impact on vulnerable children.

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