

# Long-COVID research for children limited, students find

August 31 2022

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Catherine Campos and Samantha Prokopich worked this summer on two studies looking at long covid in children. Credit: University of Manitoba

Two undergraduate student researchers at the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences say more study is needed on the long-term effects of COVID on children.

"We think children were kind of at a disadvantage from the start because of the vaccines being rolled out a bit later for them," said Catherine Campos, who is entering her second year of the bachelor of respiratory therapy program at the College of Rehabilitation Sciences.

Campos and Samantha Prokopich, a second-year student in the Interdisciplinary Health Program, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, worked this summer with Dr. Diana Sanchez-Ramirez, a researcher and assistant professor of respiratory therapy, on two projects looking into long COVID in children.

Long COVID is a condition that affects people beyond their initial COVID-19 infection. The most common symptoms of long COVID are fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle pain and difficulty concentrating.

The primary work was a systematic review of persistent long COVID effects on [lung function](#), cardiorespiratory symptoms and fatigue in children and teenagers. The study identified 17 relevant articles published in several medical journals.

"We focused on the persistent effects of COVID after three months of their initial diagnosis. We looked at things like lung imaging, their function, cardiorespiratory symptoms, fatigue and their ability to return to school," Campos said.

"With children, it could affect their respiratory system along with other [organ systems](#), such as cardiovascular and neurological."

She also noted that children are not as likely as adults to go to follow-up appointments following the acute phase of COVID.

"The research on [children](#) and adolescents is scarce, a lot of people are unsure if long COVID is something they are experiencing," she said.

The second project Campos and Prokopich are involved in is a survey on the prevalence of long COVID in Manitoba. [The survey is open](#) to any Manitobans who wish to participate.

"The data are coming from health practitioners, respiratory therapists, all within health institutions. We're trying to figure out if people are actually going to get help for long COVID or if it's one of those things where they say, 'I'll just work through it and see what happens,'" Prokopich said.

The students both received an Undergraduate Research Award from the University of Manitoba for this summer research work. The award allows recipients to choose a professor to pair with whose work aligns with their interests.

"It just so happened that we were both really interested in (Sanchez-Ramirez's) lab and COVID research," Prokopich said.

"I have family who have kids that are currently going to middle schools and [elementary schools](#), so having a chance to see how COVID is affecting people close to me was a really exciting opportunity."

The [systematic review](#) took place over 16 weeks, starting in May and concluding in August. The survey will continue into the fall.

"We are hoping that this study, along with filling out the survey, helps people to openly discuss and identify symptoms that may be long COVID," Campos said.

Provided by University of Manitoba

Citation: Long-COVID research for children limited, students find (2022, August 31) retrieved

24 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-long-covid-children-limited-students.html>

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