



5th May, 2021

מועצת החרום הציבורית למשבר הקורונה
The Israeli Public Emergency Council for the Covid19 Crisis
مجلس الطوارئ العام لأزمة كورونا

To:
Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu
Deputy Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Beni Gantz
Minister of Health, Mr. Yuli Edelstein
Opposition Leader, Mr. Yair Lapid
Shas Chairman, Rabbi Aryeh Deri
Yamina Chairman, Mr. Naftali Bennett
Labor Party Chairman, Ms. Merav Michaeli
Torah Judaism Chairman, Rabbi Moshe Gafni
Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman, Mr. Avigdor Lieberman
Religious Zionism Chairman, Mr. Bezalel Smotrich
Joint List Chairman, Mr. Ayman Odeh
New Hope Chairman, Mr. Gideon Saar
Meretz Chairman, Mr. Nitzan Horowitz
RAAM Chairman, Mr. Mansour Abbas

Subject: Request for In-depth Study of Morbidity Data Prior to Deciding Whether to Vaccinate Children and Adolescents Against COVID-19

Honorable representatives,

Even if you choose not to read the entire letter, it is important that you read at least the following paragraph, **so that one cannot say in a month, year or decade: "I did not know"**.

The data and research clearly show that the risk to children of COVID-19 is lower than common winter illnesses, and that children are a marginal factor in the spread of the virus, especially at present when the vast majority of the elderly population has been vaccinated. Furthermore, there is scant knowledge on the safety of the vaccine for children due to the fact that the vaccine is not FDA approved and has received a permit for emergency use only. Moreover, a real safety concern appeared in the report of the Committee appointed by the Ministry of Health which shows a link between the vaccine and incidences of myocarditis (heart muscle inflammation). The fact that **90% of cases occurred after the second vaccine** renders the assumption of a random correlation illogical. More concerning, according to the report, the prevalence of the phenomenon is significantly higher in younger people. Consequently, our professional opinion is that **the vaccine's authorization should not be extended to children under 16**, at least not until information is collected clarifying the degree of vaccine safety for children, including in the long-term.

We turn to you, the party leaders - those of you who are in the current coalition, and those who will be in the future coalition. We turn to you, as those who have dedicated our entire lives to the health and well-being of the citizens of Israel, each of us in our specialized field: health system and hospital administrators, epidemic treatment team leaders, university department and faculty heads, department managers and more. **Our petition is based on many years of accumulated experience in managing health systems and public health policy, and on the professional opinions of global experts in immunology, epidemics and risk management, and stems from a deep commitment to the health of the country's citizens.**

In recent weeks, various calls have been made time and time again, including the Prime Minister's call, that preparations should be made to vaccinate children against COVID-19. These statements are made categorically and unwaveringly and accompanied with claims that those who oppose vaccinating children are irresponsible. Not one of us has been opposed to vaccines and is not currently opposed to vaccines. Most of us have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Some of us have even recommended to hundreds and even thousands of patients to be vaccinated. Some of us have been or are engaged in researching the immune system and vaccines. Having said all this, we consider it a professional duty, a human duty, a duty to the people of Israel and a duty for the sake of historical record to write to you the following:

Firstly, all research data from Israel and around the world indicates that in contradistinction to the high risk to adults with COVID-19, **the risk to children who contract the virus is extremely low. For children, the risk is even significantly lower than the risk of common winter illnesses such as influenza.**

Chart 10: Number of visits to the emergency ward of the "Clalit" hospitals for all diagnoses – 2018-2020



Yellow – Pediatric Emergency Ward Green - Internal Emergency Ward



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Furthermore, the data indicates that **children are a marginal risk factor for adults** (certainly for those who are vaccinated). Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 morbidity levels among children have reflected the level of adult morbidity.

This is evidenced by a decline of 95% in child morbidity in the last two months despite children not being vaccinated, and despite schools gradually fully reopening. As reported by the Ministry of Health and professional unions, less than half a percent of children needed significant medical assistance for COVID-19, and almost all have fully recovered. Hospitalization rates and mortality rates are significantly lower than influenza, and most cases of hospitalization of children "with COVID-19" were due to other medical reasons such as serious prior medical conditions and accidents.

Secondly, vaccines for COVID-19 are not yet approved by the FDA. Only an emergency use approval has been given for adults and this before all the normal testing procedures that take several years to complete have finished to verify the safety of the vaccine for adults and for more vulnerable populations such as children. Furthermore, the vaccine was originally developed for adults and necessary adjustments (e.g., dosage) have not yet been determined for younger age groups that have their own special characteristics. The number of children vaccinated so far is so low that a systematic learning process towards understanding these critical aspects is not yet possible.

Thirdly, **knowledge-disparities regarding vaccine safety, and in particular for teenagers and children, are not hypothetical but substantive.** We addressed some of these disparities in a paper published on April 12, 2021 (enclosed herewith). Furthermore, a report of the special committee appointed by the Ministry of Health to examine serious side effects caused by the vaccine has now been published which validates the concerns raised. This report suggests that the vaccine may cause incidences of myocarditis (heart muscle inflammation), almost all of which occurred shortly after the second vaccine, which renders the assumption of random correlation illogical. According to the report, the frequency of cases in vaccinated males (ages 16-30) was "higher than expected" – 1/20,000, five times that of the general population. Furthermore, according to data provided by the Association of Pediatricians, the prevalence among vaccinated youths was even higher – 1/ 12,500. By comparison, Pediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome (PIMS), which is the most common serious complication in children who contracted COVID-19, has been diagnosed over the past year in 84 children, with an incidence of about one in 36,000 children. Further support can be found in our team's analysis of the US Vaccine Adverse Effect Reporting System (VAERS), which showed a higher incidence of the phenomenon in youths.

Under these conditions, the rationale for administering the vaccine to children in order to protect the adult population or to achieve an unclear goal of "herd immunity" is immoral and contradicts the principles of medical ethics.

Careful and transparent monitoring of side-effects should be conducted. Vaccine producers should also be required to provide analysis of appropriate dosage adjustments for children which will involve a quality control process carried out by independent experts as is customary around the world. A clear procedure for vaccinating in exceptional cases (such as children at risk, or children of parents wishing to vaccinate children) should be formulated, while also providing a comprehensive explanation, published in an information leaflet, together with receipt of a signed document of informed consent.

We reiterate that the COVID-19 vaccine is not yet approved for use by the FDA and has only been granted a permit for emergency usage. **Children are not in an emergency category and there is no reason to put them at risk. Implementation must be delayed until receipt of full study results.**

We hereby offer our assistance to each of you who are interested in studying and comprehending the extensive and overwhelming amount of information that is currently available. We will also be happy to participate in any joint discussion with our colleagues at the Ministry of Health or the various unions who may hold differing opinions to our own.

As we have stood by the citizens of Israel in times of war, crisis and distress, we stand gladly at your disposal and at the disposal of the citizens of Israel, especially the young, also in these tumultuous times.

Yours sincerely,

The Public Emergency Council for the Covid19 Crisis



The Members of the Council* (in alphabetical order)



Dr. Yifat Abdi-Kork

An expert in epidemiology and molecular biology, served as a Consultant to the national health basket public committee and Head of Pharmacoeconomics Department, Israeli Center for Technology Assessment in Health Care, the Gertner Institute.



Prof. Zvika Granot

Professor of Immunology in the Faculty of Medicine at the Hebrew University. An international expert in the field of neutrophil research, is developing new approaches to immunotherapy.



Dr. Bruria Adini

PhD in Health Systems Management, serves as head of the Department of Emergency and Disaster Management at Tel Aviv University. Former Head of the IDF Emergency Preparedness Division (Lt. Col.) and Senior Consultant to the Ministry of Health's Emergency Division.



Dr. Michal Hemo Lotem

Pediatrician, Entrepreneur and author on leadership at medical futurism. Served as Vice President of Innovation at the Sheba Medical Center, and as a member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Council. Founded Beterem - Safe Kids Israel, and OSHEYA - Women Lead Wellness. Received Prime Minister's special Award for her contribution to children.



Prof. Amos Adler

Professor of Medicine in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Specialist in Pediatrics and Clinical Microbiology. Director of the Microbiological Laboratory at Sourasky Medical Center Tel Aviv, Treasurer of the Israeli Association for Infectious Diseases.



Prof. Asa Kasher

Professor Emeritus of Professional Ethics and Philosophy at Tel Aviv University. Laureate of the Israel Prize for Philosophy. Member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. Wrote dozens of state and public codes of ethics, including the military code of ethics, as well as serving as a member of several national public committees



Prof. Elian Alkrinawi

Professor of Social Work, served as president of the Achva College, head of the Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University and as dean of the School of Social Work at Memorial University in Canada. Killam Award winner and beacon lighter at the 2013 Independence Day ceremony.



Prof. Amnon Lahad

Specialist in Family Medicine (ISR) and Public health (US). Head departments of Family Medicine Hebrew University & Clalit Health Services, Jerusalem, Israel. Vice Dean Academia – Family medicine, Hebrew University. Chairman of the National Council for the Health of the Community. Active Family physician in Jerusalem.



Prof. Zvi Bentwich

Professor of Medicine, specialist in Clinical Immunology and Infectious Diseases. Served as Chief of Department of Medicine, and pioneered AIDS medicine in Israel. Currently Head of Center for Tropical Diseases and AIDS at Ben-Gurion University. President of NALA Foundation for the Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Developing Countries and Board Member of Physicians for Human Rights in Israel.



Prof. Retsef Levi

Professor of Operations Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. An international expert in safety, risk management and analytics-driven design and optimization of health systems and biologic drugs manufacturing systems. He is leading several large-scale research collaborations across the world with leading industry enterprises and government organizations. He has consulted multiple state governments during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Dr. Orna Blondheim

Specialist in Pediatrics and Neonatology as well as Director of Health Systems. She served as the director of the Schneider Children's Hospital and served 16 years as CEO of Emek Medical Center



Prof. Udi Qimron

Chair of the Department of Clinical Microbiology and Immunology at Tel Aviv University. Expert in T cells, mucosal vaccines, genetic engineering of bacterial viruses, and CRISPR. Published in Science, Nature and Cell and has won prestigious research grants including the ERC. Partner in the establishment of the SARS-CoV-2 testing laboratories.



Prof. Emerita Rivka Carmi

Professor of Medicine, Specialist in Pediatrics, Neonatology and Medical Genetics. Served as Director of the Genetic Institute at Soroka Hospital, Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Ben-Gurion University, Chairman of the Dean of Medical Schools Association, President of Ben-Gurion University and Chairman of the Board of Universities.



Dr. Amir Shachar

Specialist in internal medicine, cardiology, emergency medicine and health administration. Established and managed the Department of Emergency Medicine at Sheba Hospital, was deputy director of Meir Hospital and currently heading the ER at Laniado Hospital. Founded the Emergency Medicine department at Tel Aviv University.



Prof. Aaron Ciechanover

Serves as a Distinguished Professor at the Faculty of Medicine in the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. Awarded with the chemistry Nobel Prize, as well as the Lasker Award, the Israel Prize, and the EMET Prize. He is a member of the US National Academies of Sciences (NAS) and Medicine (NAM), the Israeli National Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican.



Prof. Mordechai Shani

Professor of Medicine and Medical Management, Specialist in Internal Medicine. Winner of the Israel Prize. Served twice as Director General of the Ministry of Health and Director of Sheba Hospital, as well as Chairman of the Medicines Committee. Founded and managed the School of Public Health at Tel Aviv University, and also established and managed the National Institute for Health Policy Research.



Prof. Eran Dolev

Professor of Medicine, Military Medicine and Medical History, Specialist in Internal Medicine, Director of Health Systems and Ethics in Medicine. He served as Surgeon General of the IDF, as Director of the Internal Medicine Department, and as Chairman of the Ethics Bureau of the Medical Association and Head of the International Review Board of Tel Aviv University.



Prof Emerita Zahava Solomon

Lt. Col (ret). Recipient of the Israel Prize, the Emet Prize and The Laufer Award. Her research in Social Work and Psychiatric Epidemiology focuses on man - made trauma. Served as head of research in mental health IDF. Head of the School of Social Work and director of the Trauma I-Core, TAU and DSM-4 (APA) committee.



Prof. Asher Elhayany

Professor of Medicine, Specialist in Family Medicine and Public Administration. He served as the CEO of Meir Hospital, the director of the Central District at Clalit Medical Centre, and as the director of the United Health Fund. He served as chairman of the National Council for Health in the Community. Family doctor in the Negev.



Dr. Yoav Yehezkeili

Specialist in Internal Medicine and Medical Management. Lecturer in the Department of Emergency and Disaster Management at Tel Aviv University. Lt. Col. Res., One of the founders of the epidemic treatment team and evaluation programs for extreme biological incidents. Served as a hospital's deputy director, district physician, director of the primary care division in the HMOs. Medical consultant to KI research institute.



Prof. Eitan Friedman

Professor of Medicine in the Department of Genetics and Biochemistry, Specialist in Internal Medicine and Medical Genetics, PhD from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. Established the Ontogenetic Unit and Clinic for High-Risk Women at Sheba Hospital, serves as chair of the Ministry of Health's Supreme Helsinki Committee.

*The opinions expressed are the individual opinions of the members, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the institutions to which the members are affiliated.