THE LANCET **Child & Adolescent Health**

Supplementary appendix 1

This appendix formed part of the original submission and has been peer reviewed. We post it as supplied by the authors.

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Appendix 1

Supplementary Methods

Search strategies

Starting from January 2022, we searched the COVID-19 L·OVE (Living OVerview of Evidence) platform and World Health Organisation COVID-19 Research Database every 6 weeks. As described in the [review protocol](https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/display_record.php?RecordID=306822) (CRD42022306822), we piloted whether a simplified search approach fully identifies the relevant literature. As all eligible studies were included in the COVID-19 L·OVE repository, searches in the World Health Organisation COVID-19 Research Database were terminated after 02 June 2022, as no additional relevant records were identified over the piloting phase.

COVID-19 L·OVE (Living OVerview of Evidence) platform

The L·OVE repository is available from [https://iloveevidence.com/.](https://iloveevidence.com/) It is regularly updated and includes 41 databases, thereby covering major databases (e.g., PubMed/Medline, EMBASE, CINAHL), trial registries (e.g., ICTRP Search Portal, Clinicaltrials.gov, ISRCTN registry) and preprint servers (e.g., medRxiv, bioRxiv, SSRN Preprints, ChinaXiv).

The search was performed using the following approach:

(1) Filtered by PICO:

> Prevention or treatment

> Public health

> Vaccination

> SARS-CoV-2 vaccines

(2) Combined with the following search string:

infan* OR newborn* OR new-born* OR neo-nat* OR neonat* OR picu* OR nicu* OR baby OR babies OR suckling* OR toddler* OR child* OR adolescen* OR pediatric* OR paediatric* OR pube* OR juvenil* OR preschool* OR youngster* OR kindergart* OR kid OR kids OR boy* OR girl*

World Health Organization COVID-19 Research Database

The WHO COVID-19 research database is available from [https://search.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel](https://search.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/)[coronavirus-2019-ncov/.](https://search.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/) It covers multiple, multilingual databases, is updated daily, and is based on searches in databases, specific journals (e.g., Eurosurveillance), preprints, and is further complemented by hand searching, and expert-referred scientific articles.

The search was performed using the following search string:

Risk of Bias

ROBINS-I

We used ROBINS-I^{1,2} to assess the risk of bias in NRSI. Outcomes rated with ROBINS-I as critical were not included in the data synthesis to avoid misleading conclusions. A study was classified at critical risk of bias if at least one domain was rated as critical according to the following criteria:

• **Bias due to confounding**:

A study was classified as critical risk of bias due to confounding if confounding was not measured and/or uncontrolled (i.e., baseline characteristics were not reported, analysis was not adjusted for covariates).

• **Bias in selection of participants into the study:**

A study was considered to be at critical risk for selection bias if a substantial proportion of the followup period was likely not included in the analyses and the rate ratio or participants in intervention and control group was not constant over time.

• **Bias in classification of interventions:**

Critical bias due to misclassification was assigned when there was an extremely high degree of misclassification of intervention status, e.g., due to an unusually strong recall bias. (Considered as unusual.)

• **Bias due to deviations from intended intervention:**

A study was rated at critical risk of bias due to deviation from the intervention if effects on the outcome may have resulted from the initiation of and adherence to the intervention, such as when the intervention status changed over time and this was not adequately accounted for in the analysis.

• **Bias due to missing data:**

A study was rated at critical risk for missing data bias if there were critical differences between interventions among participants with missing data, and the missing data could not be identified by appropriate analysis or were not accessible.

• **Bias in measurement of outcomes:**

Bias in measurement of outcomes was considered critical if the outcome measurement was so different between intervention groups that they could not be reasonably compared (i. e., the methods of outcome assessment (NAAT, antigen test), or testing behavior differed significantly between intervention groups).

• **Bias in selection of the reported results:**

Bias from selective reporting of results was considered critical when there was evidence or strong suspicion of selective reporting of results (i.e., large deviations from protocol) and the unreported results are likely to differ significantly from the reported results.

QUIPS

The Quality In Prognosis Studies (QUIPS) tool was developed to assess the risk of bias in studies of prognostic factors.³ The concept is similar to the one of other risk of bias tools and addresses study participation, attrition, outcome measurement, confounding, statistical analysis and reporting, and the measurement of the prognostic factor.

As prognostic factors are defined as any characteristic that is predictive of a person's subsequent outcome,⁴ this could also be previous exposures (e.g. history of SARS-CoV-2 infection), but also the vaccination status of individuals when looking at outcomes following SARS-CoV-2 infection. As QUIPS is suitable for risk of bias assessments of single-arm studies, we decided to use this tool. For the domain focusing on the measurement of the prognostic factor, we considered the outlined aspects and applied them to our intervention of interest (i.e., COVID-19 vaccination).

In the respective domain, we assessed the following:

- Whether a clear definition of the vaccination status was provided (i.e. type of vaccine, number of doses, dosage)
- Whether the vaccination status was adequately recorded (e.g. in electronic health records, vaccination registries) or whether it relied on recall of caregivers or participants
- Whether the definition and recording of the vaccination status was the same for all study participants

Data analysis

Primary analyses were performed using a random-effects model. The restricted maximum likelihood (REML) method was used for estimating the between-study variance Tau squared.⁵ Study effects for VE were pooled by applying the inverse variance method, while the pooled RR for safety outcomes was calculated by weighting the study effects with the Mantel-Haenszel method. We used the Hartung-Knapp adjustment for random-effects meta-analyses^{6,7} with 3 or more studies and, as ad hoc correction, used the 95% CI of the classic random-effects model or the Hartung-Knapp meta-analysis, whichever was wider.⁸

We specified the following subgroup analyses in the protocol anticipating that many of them would not be feasible due to the lack of data: vaccine type; product; incomplete / complete / booster dosing regimen; age group (e.g., 0-4 years vs. 5-11 years); sex (female vs. male); location (geographical region); baseline immunity (seropositive vs. seronegative) through natural infection, or after basic vaccination for booster-vaccination studies; risk groups (e.g., for immunocompromised participants); concomitant treatments (e.g., B-cell depleting therapies). Prespecified sensitivity analyses included risk of bias (e.g., low risk of bias vs. unclear and high risk of bias studies with the same study design); study design (prospective vs. retrospective); type of publication: peer-reviewed vs. other publication formats (e.g. preprint articles, letters); random-effects vs. fixed-effect model meta-analysis; and exclusion of studies with inexplicably high or low effects.

We intended to explore potential publication bias for outcomes with ≥ 10 included studies through investigation of funnel plot asymmetry and by conducting a linear regression test according to the Cochrane Handbook⁹. However, this was not possible as we included a maximum of 6 studies per outcome in meta-analysis.

Certainty of evidence (GRADE)

The certainty of evidence (CoE) was assessed using the GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation) approach.¹⁰

GRADE considers five domains (risk of bias, consistency of effect, imprecision, indirectness and publication bias) in addition to the consideration of the underlying study design to rate the certainty of evidence. In accordance with the GRADE guidelines on rating the certainty of evidence for NRSIs, we started with a high CoE for outcomes assessed with ROBINS-I.¹¹

For each of the considered domains we downgrade our certainty by 1 level, in case of serious concerns, or by 2 levels in case of very serious concerns, resulting in the overall rating of high, moderate, low or very low for each evaluated outcome.¹⁰

Study overview

List of included studies

List of ongoing studies

List of studies awaiting classification

Studies awaiting classification were those that nearly met inclusion criteria, but relevant information was missing to fully determine eligibility (e.g. with missing subgroup data for our age-group of interest), or those that may become eligible for future versions of this review (e.g. studies using COVID-19 vaccines in the relevant age-group, however without approval in the EU).

EU: European Union

List of excluded studies after full-text screening

Supplementary results

Risk of Bias

Judgements per study and outcome are provided for each domain of the respective assessment tool in the provided RoB spreadsheet (Appendix 2) and summarised below.

Risk of bias in RCTs

Overall, we had some concerns of bias for most outcomes assessed (13/17). Efficacy outcomes (VE against SARS-CoV-2 infection, symptomatic COVID-19, hospitalisation, mortality, and MIS-C) were all judged with some concerns, due to performing a per-protocol rather than an intention-to-treat analysis, leading to missing outcome data in both trials^{12,13} and the probability of selective reporting in one trial as interim analysis was not performed according to pre-specified rule.¹²

All safety outcomes (AESIs, local and systemic reactions, and unsolicited AEs), except for SAEs, were also judged with some concerns of bias. Our concerns originated from the measurement of the outcomes as parts of the study personnel were not blinded (e.g., persons administering vaccinations). Outcomes were self-reported events (electronic study diary), and possible knowledge of group assignment (communicated knowingly or unknowingly by study personnel) could have influenced the reporting or assessment of events by individual study participants or caregivers. We judged SAEs with a low risk of bias, because a possible knowledge of the intervention status would probably not affect ascertainment of SAEs given the objectiveness of the outcome due to their underlying severity.

Risk of bias in NRSIs

The overall risk of bias in NRSIs was rated at least with a serious risk in about half of the outcomes (serious risk: 13/40; critical risk: 8/40). All but two assessed outcomes referred to effectiveness data. Key concerns mainly originated from incomplete or missing adjustment for relevant confounders (e.g. comorbidities, (time since) previous SARS-CoV-2 infection, socioeconomic status or risk of exposure, etc.). Outcomes that were not judged as "serious" or "critical" were rated with a moderate risk of bias (19/40), mainly due to potential residual confounding and the probability of selective reporting due to the retrospective study designs. Those were: SARS-CoV-2 infections reported in 6 studies, ¹⁴⁻¹⁹ symptomatic COVID-19 reported in 5 studies, ^{17,18,20-22} and COVID-19 related hospitalisation reported in 4 studies.^{16,21-23}

As recommended in the ROBINS-I guidance, outcomes rated with a critical risk of bias were not further included in data synthesis.² Those were: SARS-CoV-2 infections in 1 study,²⁴ COVID-19 related hospitalisation reported in 3 studies, $25-27$ ICU-admissions reported in 2 studies, $26,27$ deaths reported in 1 study, 27 and myocarditis in 1 study.²⁸

Risk of bias in single-arm studies

As only the approved dosing schedule was included in our review, data from dose-finding phase 1 trials were assessed along with other single-arm studies with the QUIPS-tool. All assessed outcomes were safety outcomes (SAEs, AESIs, local and systemic reactions, and unsolicited AEs), and 43/52 were rated as "high" for the overall risk of bias. Local and systemic reactions, and unsolicited AEs were mostly rated with a high risk of bias, mainly due to the subjectivity in the outcome assessment, and the potential of confounding due to missing assessment of relevant confounders (e.g. sex, comorbidities, etc.). Serious AEs and AESIs reported by the phase 1 trials $12,13$ were judged with a moderate risk of bias, as confounding was also not considered. We had no concerns in outcome measurement as participants were closely monitored and objective definitions used. Serious AEs and AESIs reported by the observational studies were rated with a serious risk of bias, as in addition to concerns of potential confounding, there were concerns of attrition or in the measurement of the outcomes (e.g. because data was derived from a nationwide voluntary reporting system and several events probably not reported).

Study characteristics

Study, participant and intervention characteristics

Study, participant and intervention characteristics (continued)

NR: not reported, CG: control group, COI: conflicts of interest, IG: intervention group, IQR: inter quartile range, NA: not applicable, not reported, RCT: randomised controlled trial, SD standard deviation

*Subsample of Creech et al. †Passive surveillance (registries used). ‡Less than 33% of authors and neither first-or last author declare relevant financial COIs (see column COI disclosures). [§]More than 33% of authors or first-or last author declare relevant financial COIs (see column COI disclosures). ¹Active surveillance. Variant of concern not relevant in safety-only studies. **Academia or governmental. ††If variants were not reported by the study, cases were differentiated by calendar time. ‡‡Average age indicated as it was reported. Age given in months. ^{§§}Average age indicated as it was reported. The data were extracted exclusively from cases between 5 and 11 years of age. [¶]Bivalent booster, children had already received 2-4 doses before further booster. "This could also include children <5 years of age, but mRNA-1273 was not approved in younger children before the end of the observation period. ***Compared with expected rate from a population-based data estimate derived from individuals without a diagnosis of COVID-19 between March 2020 and January 2021 from the US Premier Healthcare Database.

Overview of reported outcomes per study

*Subsample of Creech et al. †Outcome data presented graphically only. ‡Safety data from single-arm studies were not included in meta-analysis. §Estimates excluded from metaanalysis due to critical risk of bias (see Appendix 2). ^{*I*Estimates were excluded from the meta-analysis since a single-dose scheme was examine.}

Vaccine effectiveness

Vaccine effectiveness against pre-Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variants

SARS-CoV-2 infection

One NRSI assessed VE after the first dose against Delta-infections (VE 56%, 95% CI 50 to 61, N=61,350).¹⁸ VE after two doses against SARS-CoV-2 infections with pre-Omicron virus variants (not specified) was 73% (95% CI 41% to 87%, N=3497, CoE: moderate) in the identified RCT, and 85% (95% CI 80 to 89, N=59,786, CoE: moderate) in a NRSI against Delta-infections. Booster vaccinations were not recommended for children 5-11 years before the Omicron era.

Symptomatic COVID-19

Single-dose VE against symptomatic COVID-19 was 49% (95% CI 37 to 59, 1 NRSI, N=61,350) in the Deltaera.¹⁸ VE against symptomatic COVID-19 caused by pre-Omicron variants after complete basic immunization (i.e. 2 doses) was 86·7% (95% CI 58·1% to 95·8%, 2 RCTs, N=5465, CoE: moderate) in RCTs and 84% (95% CI 75 to 91, 1 NRSI, N=59,786, CoE: moderate) in an observational study.

Hospitalisation due to COVID-19

Hospitalisations due to COVID-19 were reported in one RCT (pre-Omicron era), with no cases in either group.¹²

COVID-19 related mortality

COVID-19 related mortality was reported in one RCT (pre-Omicron era). No deaths were reported for either group.^{12}

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C)

There were zero cases of MIS-C reported in the RCTs.

Long-term effects of COVID-19 ('Long COVID' or Post-COVID)

We identified no data on the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on long COVID, neither from RCTs nor from observational studies.

The summary of our vaccine effectiveness findings against pre-Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variants comprising relative and absolute effects and GRADE assessments are presented per outcome in the table below.

Summary of vaccine effectiveness findings against pre-Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variants

Abbreviations:

CI: confidence interval, EMA: European Medicines Agency, GRADE: Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation, NA: not applicable, N.E.: not estimable, NR: not reported, NRSI: non-randomized study of intervention, **PCR:** polymerase chain reaction, **RCT:** randomized controlled trial, **SARS-CoV-2**: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus type 2, **VE:** vaccine efficacy/effectiveness

Footnotes:

*Note: The estimated absolute effect refers to the difference between the observed baseline risk reported for the unvaccinated control group and the risk for experiencing an outcome after vaccination. The absolute effect e for the intervention group is based on the relative effect magnitude of an effect and the baseline risk; i.e. (observed risk /100,000 unvaccinated children) * relative effect. [†] Note: Relative effects (vaccine effectiven ratios [RR] were derived from meta-analysis, or of one study if no pooled estimate was available. [‡]Note: Crude number of symptomatic COVID-19 cases in unvaccinated children not reported.

GRADE Working Group grades of evidence:

High certainty: we are very confident that the true effect lies close to that of the estimate of the effect.

Moderate certainty: we are moderately confident in the effect estimate: the true effect is likely to be close to the estimate of the effect, but there is the possibility that it is substantially different.

Low certainty: our confidence in the effect estimate is limited: the true effect may be substantially different from the estimate of the effect.

Very low certainty: we have very little confidence in the effect estimate: the true effect is likely to be substantially different from the estimate of effect.

Support for Judgements:

^aOne level for serious imprecision (one study with few events).

b_{one} level for serious imprecision (data of only one study).

^cOne level for serious imprecision (artificial precision induced by analysis method).

dTwo levels for very serious imprecision (zero or few events).

Vaccine effectiveness against Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variant

Vaccine effectiveness against SARS-CoV-2 infections and symptomatic COVID-19 over time

Single-dose vaccine effectiveness

Two studies each assessed VE after the first dose against Omicron-infections (VE 18·9%, 95% CI 0·2 to 34·2),18,49 against symptomatic COVID-19 (VE 9·9%, 95% CI 3·6 to 15·7),18,22 and against hospitalizations due to COVID-19 (VE 55.2%, 95% CI 16.1 to 76.1).^{54,55}

Vaccine safety

Overview of reported safety outcomes

AE: adverse event; CDC: Centers for Disease Control; CI: confidence interval; IQR: inter quartile range; MIS-C: Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children associated with COVID-19; NA: not applicable; NR: not reported**.**

*Any AE that leads to death, is life-threatening, requires inpatient hospitalisation or prolongation of existing hospitalisation, leads to persistent or significant incapacity or substantial disruption of the ability to conduct normal life functions, congenital anomaly or birth defects, or medically important events. [†]Obtained from Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). ‡ A comprehensive list of investigated AESIs is provided in table 39 of the EMA Assessment report. $^{\circ}$ Obtained from US Centers for disease control Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD). [¶]CVS Health database. ^{||} Optum Pre-adjudicated claims database. ^{**}HealthCore database. ^{††}All participants experienced an allergic reaction after dose 1. ‡‡Background incidences (2014-2018). §§Level 1, definitive case; level 2, probable case; level 3, possible case; level 4, reported events with insufficient evidence; level 5, not a case of myocarditis/pericarditis. Th Expected cases based on background incidence rates from the US Premier Healthcare Database. ^{Ill} Text Message-Based Vaccine Safety Surveillance System. ***14/16 reported injection site pain; unclear whether remaining 2 participants had experienced other/additional local reactions. ^{†††}Obtained from Vaccine Safety Datalink (v-safe). ^{‡‡‡}Text Message-Based Vaccine Safety Surveillance System. ^{§§§}8/16 reported fatigue; unclear whether the other 8 participants had experienced other/additional systemic reactions. ¹¹ Events were recorded on days 2, 7, and 20 after each dose, however not over the whole period. ^{||||||}|COVID-19 vaccination management system (CVMS, a web-based passive vaccine safety surveillance system).

Additional outcomes

ICU admission due to COVID-19

Data on ICU admissions were reported in five NRSIs. Two of these are not further described due to the critical risk of bias. 26,27 Evidence from a hospital-based, case–control, test-negative study resulted in 5/70 ICU admission for fully vaccinated and 55/467 for unvaccinated patients.⁵² A cohort study from Italy observed zero ICU admissions in n=1,063,035 vaccinated and 15 ICU admissions in 1,768,497 unvaccinated children.²¹ Another cohort study from Qatar observed no cases, in either vaccinated or unvaccinated children (n=18728 per group).¹⁶ Adjusted effect estimates were not available.

Immunogenicity

Overview of reported immunogenicity outcomes

Study	Serological test	Definition of seroresponse	Variant	Participants with seroresponse	GMT (95% CI)
Walter et al Phase 1^{12}	microneutralization assay-NT50	4 from baseline*	Delta	NR/15	4163 $(2584.7 \text{ to } 6704)$
		IgG antibody response			
Cinicola et al^{34}	DiaSorin Liaison SARS-CoV-2 TrimericS IgG assay, BAU/ml	NR	NR	NR/27	8380 (5120 to 11800)
	Anti-SARS-CoV- 2 NCP ELISA assay	NR	NR	NR/27	0.45 $(0.22$ to $1.3)$
Chantasrisawad et al ³³	Anti-S-RBD IgG against the ancestral strain, BAU/mL	NR	Omicron	NR	BNT162b2 (8 weeks): 2119 (1900 to 2364) BNT162b2 (3 weeks): 2242 (2041 to 2463)
Doucette et al ³⁶	Abbott ARCHITECT SARS-CoV-2 nucleocapsid IgG assay	Sample calibration (S/C) value of ≥1.4	Omicron	Visit 3 ¹ : 0/21 Visit 4: 98/290	NR
	Abott ARCHITECT SARS-CoV-2 spike IgG II RUO assay	\geq 50.0 arbitrary units (AU)/mL	Omicron	Visit 3: 21/21 Visit 4: 290/290	NR
Joseph et al ⁴⁴	SARS-CoV-2 IgG II Quant (Abbott, IL, USA); day 180; BAU/IU	NR	Omicron	NR	all children: 1076 (712.3 to 1624.0) Infected children: 1479.0 (878.2 to 2490.0) Uninfected children: 535.3 (288.4 to 933.6)
Kastl et al ⁴⁵	LabCorp Cov2Quant IgG Assay, mg/mL, (median, IQR)	Results of 1.0 mg/mL or greater	NR	25/25	28.0 $(18.0 \text{ to } 47.0)$
Leung et al B^{49}	S-RBD IgG	NR	Wildtype	NR	RBD IgG responses rose with every dose: 0.63, 1.35 and 2.23
Wanlapakorn et al ⁵⁷	Receptor-binding domain (RBD) (Total RBD Ig) (U/mL)	NR	NR	NR	pre dose 1: 0.4 (0.4 to 0.4) pre dose 2: $74.7 (55.3 \text{ to } 101.0)$ post dose 2: 10654.0 (8477.0 to 13390.0)
	Anti-RBD IgG (BAU/mL)	NR	NR	NR	pre dose 1: 0.5 (0.4 to 0.7) pre dose 2: 94.8 (74.7 to 120.0) post dose 2: 2872.0 (2193.0 to 3763.0)
		T-cell response			
Cinicola et al ³⁴	Standard IFN gamma ELISpo, SFC/ 10 ⁶ PBMCs	NR	Wildtype	NR/27	563 SFC/10 ⁶ (154 to 1985)
			Omicron	NR/27	27 SFC/10 ⁶ (5 to 140)
Leung et al B^{49}	Based on PBMC	NR	Wildtype	NR	$CD4+0.010\%$, 0.010%, 0.028% $CD8 + 0.010\%, 0.005\%, 0.012\%$
		NR	Omicron	NR	T cells not diminished compared to wildtype

BAU: binding antibody units; CI: confidence interval; GMT: geometric mean titer; IU: international unit; IQR: inter quartile range; NR: not reported; PBMC: Peripheral blood mononuclear cells, SFC: spot-forming cells.

*If the baseline measurement was less than the lower limit of quantitation, seroresponse by titers that were at least 4 times the lower limit of quantitation.

†Subgroup analysis of Creech et al. ‡Possible that same definition was used as for Creech et al. as data of a random sub-sample were analysed. §Plotted in graph (figure 1 of the original paper); significantly lower for omicron than against wildtype. ¶ Longitudinal study; first visit after implementation of vaccination for children 5-11 years of age.

Subgroup analyses

AE: adverse event; CI: confidence interval EPAR: European public assessment report; mRNA: messenger ribonucleic acid; NA: not applicable; NRSI: non-randomized studies of interventions; SAE: serious adverse event

Sensitivity analyses

NA: not applicable

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