Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

On the Value of COVID-19 Testing for Children Beyond the Spring of 2021

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As we pass the 1-year anniversary of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, an analysis by Moghadas and colleagues considers the value of frequent testing of schoolchildren in reducing community transmission rates. Certainly, the US and many countries find themselves in a stronger position than they were in 2020. In the US, the pace of vaccinations is increasing, and hospitalizations are now declining in most regions. This will lead some to wonder what value school-based testing can bring in the coming months, particularly during the 2021 to 2022 academic year. However, it is unlikely that the next academic year will start with classrooms of fully vaccinated children because vaccine trials are just now commencing for elementary school–age children. It is likely that many children will not be offered vaccination until 2022. Furthermore, required vaccination for school entry is unlikely to be considered widely until full US Food and Drug Administration approval has been granted (the vaccines are currently being used under a Food and Drug Administration emergency use authorization).

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