

Early detection, diagnosis of MIS-C vital

March 7, 2022 @ 12:00am

LETTERS: In Malaysia, young Covid-19 patients admitted to hospitals have been on the rise: 50,826 children under 12 have tested positive since the middle of last month.

Thirty-one per cent of them were in category 1 (asymptomatic), 68.6 per cent in category two (symptomatic, no pneumonia), and less than one per cent of cases in categories three to five (symptomatic, with pneumonia, requiring supplemental oxygen or critically ill with multi-organ involvement).

Children were initially reported to be less susceptible to Covid-19.

However, in April 2020, reports of children with a severe inflammatory sickness arose in Italy, the United Kingdom and New York as a possible post-infectious consequence of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation coined the term Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) to describe this novel pediatric disease

Not much is known about MIS-C, including its cause and risk factors, so it is classified as a syndrome (a collection of signs and symptoms) rather than a disease.

Although the majority of children who contracted Covid-19 develop minor sickness, some develop MIS-C with organs and tissues — including heart, lungs, blood vessels, kidneys, digestive system, brain, skin, and eyes — becoming severely inflamed.

Signs and symptoms among children who have MIS-C vary depending on which body parts are affected.

CDC said 6,851 people with MIS-C were documented up to Jan 31 this year, with 0.9 per cent of them succumbing to the disease.

In Malaysia, the MIS-C Malaysia Study Group said 174 children were diagnosed with MIS-C after contracting the coronavirus between June 2020 and December last year.

Children aged 5 to 9 were involved in 64 cases; 38 cases involved children aged 1 to 5; 36 cases involved children aged 9 to 12; 25 cases involved children under 1; and 11 cases involved children over 12.

In Malaysia, seven children aged 18 and under died of MIS-C caused by Covid-19 infections.

The mortality rate in Malaysia is estimated to be four per cent mainly because the young patients were brought to healthcare facilities late.

MIS-C is a relatively uncommon illness and the majority of children who have it improve with treatment. However, some children deteriorate fast.

Vaccination is one of the best strategies to keep children safe.

Clinical studies have shown that the vaccine is 91 per cent effective in children aged five to 11, and that it can boost protection against Covid-19 while lowering the risk of serious disease.

MIS-C symptoms include a fever that lasts 24 hours or more, inflammation throughout the body, and issues with organs (multisystem), including the intestines, heart, brain, lungs, skin and kidneys.

Blood clot formation is a possibility too.

Early detection and diagnosis of MIS-C, as well as prompt treatment, will result in favourable outcomes.

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