



THE DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY, BIOSTATISTICS AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, - SEMINAR SERIES IS A SELF-APPROVED GROUP LEARNING ACTIVITY (SECTION 1) AS DEFINED BY THE MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION PROGRAM OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA

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Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in School-Aged Children: Evidence from Belgian Sero-Prevalence Studies and School Based Surveillance

MONDAY, 15 MARCH 2021 / 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm - [ZOOM LINK](#)

ALL ARE WELCOME

ABSTRACT: Infection and disease affect different populations differently, and age is one of the most important dimensions that impacts all aspects of epidemic spread and health consequences. The particular case of school-aged children during the COVID-19 pandemic and their role in transmission remains not well understood. In this presentation, I present the design, implementation and results of studies among school-aged children in Belgium, including school-based seroprevalence studies and the development of a Flemish regional school surveillance network. I discuss how context, background community transmission, test data and diagnostic specimen requirements, and social determinants are important variables in the interpretation of the results. This presentation provides applied examples of evidence generation in a high-transmission region, and I conclude with discussing the implications of these research findings and how they contribute and fit into the current world

-wide knowns and unknowns on transmission of SARS-COV-2 in school children.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce concepts of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 by children and the different study designs and considerations necessary for a valid assessment of transmission dynamics;
2. Provide examples of the application of different school-based studies, focussing on sero-prevalence and case surveillance studies in Belgium;
3. Summarize knowledge of the role of children in the transmission dynamics of SARS-CoV-2.

BIO: Joanna Merckx is an epidemiologist, pediatrician, and infectious disease subspecialist holding a Master in Epidemiology from McGill University, a Doctorate in Medicine with a specialty in pediatrics from the University of Louvain and a certificate in Tropical Medicine from the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium. Joanna completed her fellowship training in the subspecialty of pediatric infectious diseases at the McGill University Health Centre and is associate member and course lecturer at McGill University's Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Occupational Health. She currently serves as the Director of Medical Affairs (Canada) for the global diagnostic company bioMérieux, which specializes in the diagnosis of infectious diseases. Her expertise and research focus lay in diagnostics and diagnostic epidemiology, clinical and pediatric epidemiology. She is currently co-investigator in the Belgian SARS-CoV-2 sero-prevalence school studies and is a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam.