

## Children Beliefs about Illness, Treatments and Vaccines after the Experience of Covid 19 Pandemic

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**Abstract :** The way children understand the concept of health and illness influences their reaction in contexts where these concepts are present (e.g., illness; vaccination). The recognition of the importance of children's beliefs/representations about health and disease has led to the development of models that seek to explain the development process of these concepts. In the construction of their representations, children are influenced not only by their cognitive competence but also by their life experiences. In the last 3 years, children have experienced a pandemic health crisis that has exposed them to anomalous and stressful situations. Objective: the aim of this study was (1) to identify children's representations about disease (including symptoms, causes, control/treatment) and prevention (including health procedures and vaccines) and (2) whether COVID19 is mentioned and influences their representations. Methodology: a qualitative study in which 67 children with 7 to 10 years old (mean 8,8) participated. A semi-structured interview was used following the Bibace and Walsh model, focusing on the representation of the disease and its prevention. Results show a marked influence of the lived experience with regard to causes of the disease, disease control and treatment, and adherence to vaccination. Age-dependent differences were found with older children being able to talk about illness and contamination process and younger displaying more basic, concrete and rigid representations. Conclusions: The results of this study bring clues to the adequacy of communication with the child in the context of health and illness and discriminately in a future health pandemic crisis.

**Keywords :** children, health beliefs, pediatrics, covid19, vaccines

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