

Rapid Response The elephant and the blind men: the need to hear the stories of the children of Long Covid

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Competing interest could be : FS is a co-founder of Long Covid Kids organisation. AL none declared.

Title: The elephant and the blind men: the need to hear the stories of the children of Long Covid.

Dear Editors

In response to Martinerie et al's Christmas issues feature article *To each child their own coronavirus*¹ we take note of the concerns about the sociological effects that the pandemic has had on children. However, feel that the article's view of 'although SARS-CoV-2 infection is less severe in children' is unsubstantiated yet as we outlined in our BMJ Blog [Counting Long Covid in children](#)² in which we highlighted that there has been insufficient epidemiological study of the long covid in children. We recognise that art is both a therapeutic outlet and a means of communication for children. which can help adults understand what the pandemic has meant to children. We appreciate the use of the use of the parable of the [blind men and the elephant](#)³ in describing the subjective experiences of coronavirus for children. Indeed, would like to extend this important allegory to include those children whose lived experience of the pandemic has been one of chronic illness; the children of long Covid. Indeed, the parable of the elephant and the blind men may also be adopted to offer a useful account of Long Covid itself; each sufferer experiencing their own idiosyncratic version with the result that it has required excellent communication between sufferers to conceptualise the syndrome. The recent [Long Covid NICE guidelines](#)⁴ are a testament to this process, a demonstration that when all the blind men share their experiences, they do not need to come to blows about their subjective descriptions. Children's experience of the virus relies on the beneficence and advocacy of adults in order to be heard. Thanks to the interest of the researchers, the children in the article's project were able to represent their experiences using the medium of drawing. Likewise, with the help of their parents and carers of children from the newly founded [Long Covid Kids organisation](#)⁵ have made use of a different creative outlet, where the children were able to speak to a camera and express their subjective experiences of the virus in their own way which was edited into a [short film](#)⁶ to tell their stories. Let us ensure that it gets heard? After all, the elephant would not be conceptualised without hearing the voices of all the blind men. Responses to the pandemic for

children need to be co-produced by children, parents/carers and the official organisations that seek to offer assistance to mitigate the adverse effects.

References

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