Delayed access to care and late presentations in children during the COVID-19 pandemic: a snapshot survey of 4,075 paediatricians in the United Kingdom and Ireland

Richard Lynn, Jacob L Avis, Simon Lenton, Zahin Amin-Chowdhury, Shamez N Ladhani, on behalf of the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit (BPSU) Scientific Committee and paediatricians in the UK and the Republic of Ireland
Methods

• 4075 consultant paediatricians on the BPSU list were contacted via Redcap
• A reminder was sent out after 5 days
• They were asked - during the previous 14 days, they had seen any children who, in their opinion, presented later than they would have expected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. delayed presentation).
• Over the next 7 days, 2,433 (60%) paediatricians responded.
• Reporting card sent 4,075 recipients on 24/04/2020
• 2,433 (~60%) returned surveys
• Reminder emails sent on 27/04/2020 & 30/04/2020

Questions
• In the last 7 days have you been on
• In the last 14 days how many children with late presentations have you seen include none x age
• Do you think the delayed presentation was related to COVID-19
Results - 1

• 419 clinicians reported what they considered delays in presentation

• 32% of these worked in Emergency department or paediatric assessment unit

• For this group newly presenting diabetes and DKA was most common late presentation. Sepsis and malignancy was also seen

• Of the 18% working on paediatric ward late presentation following labour and feeding issues following discharged were reported

• Community clinicians reported late child protection referrals

• 8 deaths were reported where the clinician felt delays played a part.
Results - 2

• Of the 18% working on paediatric ward late presentation following labour and feeding issues following discharged were reported
• Community clinicians reported late child protection referrals
• 9 deaths were reported where the clinician felt delays played a part.
Conclusion

although we do not have baseline data for comparison, our findings highlight

• An urgent need to improve public health messaging for parents, which until recently instructed everyone to stay at home
• Parents should continue to access medical care if they are concerned and must not delay getting
• Otherwise, the unintended consequences of lockdown will do more harm and claim more children’s lives than COVID-19.
Limitations

• Snap shot survey – first ever undertaken using BPSU methods.
• Could have been more detailed in answers it sought
• Depends on personal opinion
• Depends on memory
• Depends on parents being open about delays and reporting them
• No baseline data to gauge against