



**“Let us take care of
the new generations
who are our future”**

Sara Gandini

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Interview of the EuCARE partners

Q01

Interviewer: So, you are the Principal Investigator (PI) of the Molecular and Pharmaco-Epidemiology Unit of the European Institute of Oncology (IEO). Tell us a little about yourself, why are you involved with the IEO and why is the IEO involved in this project.

Sara Gandini: I'm an **epidemiologist** and **biostatistician**, **director** of the **molecular and pharmaco-epidemiology unit**. I've been working as **group leader** in many **projects** and recently the **University of Stanford** listed **me among** the **world's top 2% scientists**. As part of the **global response** to **stop** the **spread of SARS-CoV-2**, **primary** and **secondary schools** were **closed** to **on-site teaching** in many countries. This **choice**, during the **first wave**, was made on the **basis** of **data extrapolated** from **influenza transmission models**, which **suggested** that **closing schools** was a **useful strategy** to **reduce** the **baseline reproductive numbers** of **respiratory viral infections**. However, **results** were **mixed** when it came to **assessing** the **effectiveness** of these **public health measures** in **stopping** the **spread of SARS-CoV-2**. Several **studies** found **conflicting results** on **community transmission** due to the **opening** of **schools**. Furthermore, **distance learning** has been a **major concern** because it has **caused limited access** to **education** for millions of children and adolescents. It has also **caused** profound **negative consequences** for **mental health** and **general well-being**. In light of these **negative results** and the **low risk** of **severe COVID-19** in these **age groups**, the **effectiveness** of **school closures** is **questionable**. Therefore, we **conducted** a **study** in **Italy** published in **Lancet R-H** which **found no evidence** that **opening schools** caused the **second wave** and that **closing schools** is a **useful measure** to **reduce SARS-CoV-2 infections** in the population. The **EuCARE projects** were **created** to **find solutions** to **support** the **safe opening of schools** during **pandemic periods**, based on **solid scientific evidence** that takes into account the **harms** and **benefits** of all **preventive measures**.



Q02

Interviewer: Besides yourself, who else participates in this project from the IEO?

Sara Gandini: In order to **answer** all the **multiple complex questions** involved in these **studies** an **interdisciplinary group** of **high-level scientists** is involved in **several parts** of the **projects**. With **me** in **IEO** are working **Sara Raimondi, epidemiologist/biostatistician, Federica Bellerba, biostatistician** and **data scientist**, and **Elisa Tomezzoli, psychologist**.

Q03

Interviewer: The final question, the EuCARE project is divided into eight workpackages (WP). In which ones is the IEO involved and what has been done already?

Sara Gandini: We are **involved** in **more WP** but the **main** one we are **responsible** for is the **WP4**. We have **designed two epidemiological studies**. The **first** is an **interventional study** to **evaluate** the **effectiveness** of a saliva-based methodology, the **'Lolli-Method'**. We **want** to **evaluate** the **evidence** of this **cheap, reliable** and **safe surveillance system** to **reduce attack rates** and **SARS-CoV-2 clusters** in **schools**. The **second** is an **observational study** that **aims** to **evaluate** the **effectiveness** of other **containment measures**. We are **enrolling subjects** in **both studies** and are also **evaluating** the **psychological impact** of **preventive measures** and the **learning loss associated** with **preventive measures**. Finally, we are **conducting** an **international study** with the **aim** of **investigating** the **relationship** between the **reopening of schools** in **Autumn 2022** and the **transmission rates** of **SARS-CoV-2** in the **young** and **adult** populations. To this end, we **analysed** **daily** and **weekly data** on **new cases** in **three European countries** - **Italy, Germany** and **Portugal** - during a **period** when **no major preventive measures** were **taken**. This **approach** allowed us to **assess** the **net effect** of **school opening** on **transmission rates**, while the **highly transmissible Omicron variant** was **dominant** in **all countries**.

Interviewer: Thank you, Sara.

Sara Gandini: Thank you very much!



If you want to know more about the
EuCARE project or our partners

Contact us:

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