

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC SITUATION IN LATIN AMERICA

With the aim to exchange information, know the situation of the CoViD-19 pandemic in each country and foster the execution of joint activities in Latin America, the Interciencia Association promotes the realization of virtual forums with the participation of experts designated by the member associations. In the first of these forums, organized by the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC) in the month of September, prominent experts from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela participated. A second forum, also organized by SBPC, will take place on October 22th with the participation of specialists from Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, United States and Uruguay.

Several conclusions can be reached from the speakers' presentation in the forum. In the first place, it can be observed that no country escapes from Sars-CoV-2, although in some cases the official reports have such a lack of precision that they do not allow to evaluate the real magnitude of the infestation in the respective countries. There is an enormous disparity in relation to the possibilities that the health systems have in the different countries of the region in order to implement contention measures, diagnostics, contact tracing, recording of cases and deaths, the handling of all kind of needs and, in synthesis, face the strain produced by the pandemic. In this aspect, the lack of hospital equipment that was exposed in some cases is particularly outstanding.

As well as the protection measures and handling adopted by the governments of the region differ, also do the ways in which the political leaders have considered the opinions of scientists and oriented the battle against the pandemic and the attitudes of the population, as well as the incorporation of universities, academies and research institutions, and the participation of NGOs. It is noticeable that in some of the countries all these institutions have been marginalized by the authorities. In the forum it was emphasized how, in some cases, given the lack of official assistance, the population resorts to inefficient therapies, in some occasions

induced by their leaders and in others by entities with commercial interests, which leads to the utilization of ineffective procedures and medications and, in other cases to traditional formulations originating in folklore. Several countries report the existence of a disproportionately high prevalence among health personnel, similar to what happens in the rest of the world.

The social and economic consequences of CoViD-19 are of great severity in all the countries, although they were not addressed in detail in this first forum. Clearly, these consequences are more severe in those regions and places where a larger proportion of the population corresponds to that of lower income, as it is clear that, with no exception, CoViD-19 mostly affects people in the lowest income brackets.

Given the similarities and differences that can be detected in the various countries of the region, there is no doubt that the scientific communities are called to provide very valuable resources for the handling of the pandemic in all its aspects. It is necessary to lower the barrier of distrust in the population and encourage the acceptance of science in the political environments. The exchange of verifiable information and the cooperation among our communities allow to increase the capacities and facilitate the governmental action in order to control the pandemic and minimize its negative effects.

Interciencia Association, by promoting and coordinating activities such as the herein commented forum and others to be carried out in the near future, constitutes an effective regional platform for the diffusion of information and the cooperation between the scientific communities of the countries of the Americas.

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