

THE FUTURE OF THE PANDEMIC

Two years into the pandemic the future, still uncertain, has become less somber. The availability of vaccines and highly effective therapeutics reduce the apprehension. The possibility of the appearance of more aggressive variants and the ignorance about the etiopathogenesis of Covid-19 keep experts on the alert. However, two characteristics of contemporaneity stand out as the determinants of the route that awaits us: inequity and individualism.

It has already become clear that the lack of economic means, whether considered at an individual, group, national or regional level, will be a determinant factor of the persistence of Covid-19 on the planet. Although diseases and pathogenic agents do not know about race, religion nor economic status, and neither does the virus, in the case of Covid-19, it being a massive process of very fast propagation, a higher morbidity and, above all, a higher mortality among people belonging to the strata of lesser resources becomes evident. But the resources available to fight it are not distributed in an equitable manner.

It has been established that not only the morbidity and mortality indices are larger in the strata with lower incomes; the availability of vaccines and of effective treatments is limited by the local conditions and the will or convenience of facilitating, or receiving, the vaccines by those countries that produce or require them are oriented and depend upon geopolitical factors. Such is the motivation existing for the supply and donations to countries in need of vaccines produced in China and in Russia, as well as it happens with those from the United States and the European Union.

On the other hand, efforts agreed by the international community have not been easy to carry out. Such is the case of the COVAX initiative, implemented by the World Health Organization together with groups of vaccine innovators and philanthropic organizations to facilitate the distribution of and access to vaccines in countries in need of them.

As long as the infection rate is not under control all across the planet, it will not be possible to end the pandemic character of Covid-19. It can be asked whether this is possi-

ble, given the second determinant cited above. It is evident that while there are amongst us those who think that their freedom, individual or collective, is hindered by measures that are aimed at the protection of all the people, it will be very difficult to beat the virus. It is highly worrisome to see protests against measures that are considered as coercion and that take place in developed countries with high education levels.

Numerous theories, some more outlandish than others, attempt to invoke arguments clearly false and irrational, and emphasize the prevalence of individual decisions against the consideration of the general wellbeing and the real needs of society. Some media divulge and amplify them. As a result, there are demonstrations where the mass claims for the free will, against the governmental orders, even though it be in the benefit of the community.

There are not only antivax groups; there are some that reject the use of masks and other protective measures. Although before their eyes it is made clear that the lack of protection leads to infection outbreaks and that vaccination reduces in a drastic and marvelous manner the hospitalization and deaths due to Covid-19, the selfish consideration that we are free to choose our destiny, even if it is damaging to others, turns it much more difficult to try to overcome this scourge to mankind.

Fortunately, history teaches us that every pandemic comes to an end. There will be many deaths, but the pandemic will disappear. It is obvious, however, that millions of deaths could be avoided if a coherent and rational approach based on the knowledge provided by science and the intention to help others would dictate the orientations of both the groups that require being aided and of the dominant societies.

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