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Opinion – Sou Ciência: Vaccines against Covid-19 are not experimental

In this week's article, we present very important and worrying data about a national opinion survey carried out by SoU_Ciência in partnership with Ideia, with 1,200 respondents and a margin of error of 3%, and whose details will be published soon: we find out that 30.4% of the population still believe that vaccines against Covid are experimental and 17.1% do not know if vaccines have scientific proof.

This means that half the population still does not trust the vaccine!

This is a very high number, because we have now completed two years of vaccination and billions and billions of doses have been applied to the population of the whole world. This fact, by itself, is already a concrete demonstration that these vaccines are not experimental.

Even so, it is important to remember the scientific processes that vaccines go through, just like all medicines go through. Before being approved for use in humans, a new vaccine undergoes detailed studies of its chemical and biotechnological constitution. All components are tested on cell cultures, so-called tests in vitro, but also in experimental models. Once its effectiveness has been proven in these models and the absence of toxicity, studies in humans follow, which are divided into three phases carried out in volunteers. The first two phases are very controlled studies to check the vaccine's strength, but also to make sure it won't harm humans. The third phase, performed on thousands of people in different places and countries, is conducted over many months.

Even in the face of the health emergency we are experiencing, vaccines for Covid have undergone rigorous studies and analyses. In Brazil, Brazilian universities and scientists were fundamental for phase 3 studies. In addition, the vaccines that arrived here were rigorously analyzed by the regulatory body, which checks all data and makes careful statistical checks before approving any vaccine or medicine .

Our experts did this, but to be even more careful, they provided an emergency license for the first two vaccines, Coronavac and Oxford/Astrazeneca, as it was necessary to monitor the evolution of vaccination. A few months later, these vaccines received the definitive registration, which is done based on the analysis of the population. That is, millions of people received the vaccines and possible adverse effects were also recorded and analyzed.

Almost three years after the start of the pandemic in Brazil, after months of vaccine studies and two years after the start of vaccination for Covid-19, it is evident that these vaccines work, have saved and continue to save lives, prevented people from develop severe disease and its sequelae. We categorically state that vaccines are not experimental and are not being applied as if they were a human experiment in concentration camps. It is necessary to make the population aware of the importance of this tireless work by scientists so that we would have this benefit and so that we could come here today and talk about all this work.

Above all, we need to keep talking about vaccines, especially at a time when we have Omicron variants and subvariants. We are seeing an increase in the number of cases and also in hospitalizations, especially of the elderly and immunosuppressed, whose booster dose scheme already exceeds 8 months. At the same time, a considerable portion of the population has not yet taken the booster doses, which contribute so much to avoiding serious illness.

The work of scientists has not stopped, bivalent vaccines will soon come, which fight some subvariants of Omicron and which will be essential to save people whose immune systems need strengthening (as is the case of the elderly and people with some underlying diseases).

Certainly, many more challenges will come in the sense of reversing this situation, given the ideological and unjustifiable use of arguments that aim to manipulate science so that antiscience advances. You cannot play with people's health and lives with impunity. For this reason, science and education, in addition to the public policies of serious rulers, will be able to avoid these ideological distortions so present in the period we live in. Through education and science, and also the dissemination of what is done in favor of the good of society, it will be possible to envision a better Brazil.

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