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Even with flexibilities, understand why the end of the pandemic in Brazil is not yet

Announcements of relaxation of non-pharmacological measures imposed by state governments to contain the spread of Covid-19 may give the impression that the pandemic has come to an end in Brazil.

The daily average of deaths in the country, however, remains around 500 people. “To give you an idea, compared to the outbreak of influenza caused by Darwin, which is very contagious and strong, people were hospitalizedÔmicron continued to be sometimes more lethal than the flu with the new variant”, explains Soraya Smaili, professor of pharmacology at Unifesp (Federal University of the State of São Paulo).

And he adds: “We haven’t even come close to a flu yet, from the point of view of the number of deaths. [de letalidade] of the flu, we can say that maybe we have controlled the pandemic”.

Unequal vaccination in Brazil

Some states, such as São Paulo, Pauí, Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná, have more than 75% of the population with two doses of vaccine. But this is not the reality in Brazil. “One city can affect many other cities. Not all of them are at the same time of vaccination coverage. Each state has a situation, because there was no national policy, an alignment to centralize vaccination schedules. states, to homogenize vaccination. There are states that are around 50% vaccinated”, warns Soraya, who was Unifesp’s dean from 2013 to 2021 and coordinator of the Centro SOU_Ciência.

The director of SBIm (Brazilian Society of Immunizations), Monica Levi, also warns about the importance of maintaining non-pharmacological measures.

“We still cannot give up non-pharmacological measures, allow agglomeration and eliminate the use of masks, tell people to go back to having a normal life, because the pandemic is not over yet. The third dose is important. So Brazil has to continue vaccinating vulnerable groups that have not yet completed the vaccination cycle, children aged 5 to 11 years, this is what we need today, to have even greater control over the circulation of Sars-CoV-2.”

Lack of drugs available in Brazil

The circulation of the virus continues here, so there is still the possibility of people being contaminated by the most serious forms of the disease.

The lack of antiviral drugs available both in the SUS (Unified Health System) and in the supplementary health network is another factor of concern. It makes it impossible to compare the pandemic situation in Brazil with that of other countries.

“They have access to medicines that we don’t have at the moment, like paxlovid and others. These are medicines that can help those who develop the disease. [de forma] serious. These drugs are imported and cost a fortune. Some hospitals matter [esses produtos]but it is the minority that will have access to these treatments”, explains Soraya Smaili.

Possibility of new variants

The fact that Sars-CoV-2 maintains a high rate of transmission not only in Brazil but in the world, and in some countries more sharply due to the lack of vaccines, suggests that the end of the pandemic is still far away – since it is possible the emergence of new variants of the virus.

Last Wednesday (9), the WHO (World Health Organization) has warned of evidence of a new strain called Deltacronderived from the combination of Delta, which emerged in India and first detected in October 2020, and Ômicron, which appeared in South Africa and was first recognized in November 2021.

“When you think you’re in control [a pandemia], [que ela está] decreasing, everyone is happy, and a new wave comes, we’ve already seen it happen”, remembers Monica Levi.

Active transmission and the return of long holidays, like last week, call for caution. “We have just left a weekend. There may not have been Carnival in many places, but in some places there was. Besides, there were agglomerations, people moved and we still don’t know what the effects will be. “, concludes Soraya.

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