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Opinion – Sou Ciência: The pandemic does not end with a stroke of the pen

The end of the Public Health Emergency of National Importance decreed by the Ministry of Health (ESPIN) a week ago, exposes how Brazil continues without effective guidance in terms of combating covid-19 and all the possibilities that exist in a pandemic context.

The fact is that, despite the government's position and the constant failure to comply with health protocols by its representatives, and even with the indispensable process of immunization and the role of the Unified Health System (SUS), the virus still circulates among Brazilians and neglecting this process can cost us all dearly.

The alert that resonates among the scientific community was also assertively given during a virtual debate promoted by Centro SoU Ciência last night (27), which included the participation of infectologist Luana Araújo, epidemiologist Ethel Maciel, also a professor at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), and mediation by Soraya Smaili, coordinator of SoU Ciência.

Alongside the easing of measures to combat the virus, the decisions that are being taken at the national level follow the absolute lack of criteria. A pandemic, by definition, is a globally spreading disease with unprecedented impact on populations and systems.

It is not possible to talk about its end – much less dismantle mechanisms created to contain it – from local and specific contexts, completely ignoring the different realities that other countries and regions face. And this is exactly the path followed by Brazil at the moment.

Both the evolution of the pandemic and the response to it are modulated, dictating the paths of virus proliferation and mutations. As infectious disease specialist Luana Araújo said during the live, available on Youtube from Sou Ciência, "there is no stroke that ends a pandemic".

Given the different response capacities between countries, it is natural that there will be different threat levels, but ignoring that the pandemic is a multi-phase process is a brutal mistake. "The pandemic is not over, it has changed its level, and with that our response should be following this type of evolution", highlighted Araújo.

In addition to undermining the ability to react to a possible worsening of the pandemic, the decision of the Ministry of Health compromises the operational processes of response to the virus in the states and municipalities, imposing a harmful reorganization of the health care system.

Epidemiologist Ethel Maciel, a reference in the area, recalled during the virtual debate that there are no epidemiological indicators for the end of the decree, as we have a moving average of 100 deaths per day.

"If nothing changes, that means more than 30,000 people dead if we count the whole year. There are many preventable deaths at a time when we have vaccines and medicines, for us to consider this acceptable. We are not in a position to revoke the operational decree without prejudice to the society", declared the expert.

We celebrate together the achievements of science, including the victory of vaccines, which made it possible to reduce the number of cases of contamination, prevent the manifestation of the severe form of the serious disease and avoid thousands of deaths.

However, we cannot stop here. We are going through a moment of transition, with a decrease in cases and deaths, but we cannot say what will happen. As recommended by the World Health Organization, this should be a time of preparation for the possibility that we are in an interpandemic phase.

Faced with the succession of errors by the Brazilian government, the certainty we have today is that we can no longer make mistakes. It is urgent to follow science in the elaboration of plans and decision-making, which means incorporating drugs with proven effectiveness against covid-19 in the SUS, establishing work protocols at all levels of the care network, strengthening immunization campaigns and the own epidemiological monitoring of the pandemic.

Based on the evidence pointed out, SoU_Ciência proposes the repeal of the decree that ended ESPIN, as it is an indispensable step, as well as the structuring of a national coordination that listens to science, values ??the SUS, and continues to fight the public health emergency. that still plagues us and that can prepare us for the next ones.

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*Lu Sudré for SoU_Science

If you want to know more about it, watch the full debate. on here.

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