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Opinion – I am Science: Universities in defense of life

With this article, we started a series on the performance of federal public universities during the Covid-19 pandemic, in a context in which the federal government faced evidence, produced fake news, underfunded the SUS, attacked states and municipalities, discredited health professionals who worked on the front lines in a war scenario, denied science and the vaccine – even delaying its purchase and application – and was insensitive with the illness of millions and the death of hundreds of thousands of Brazilians.

Despite the adverse context, public universities, articulated with the SUS, have become fundamental bastions in defense of life. They were protagonists in the production of science in real time, references in care and reception, in supporting patients and their families, especially people in vulnerable situations.

Centro SoU_Ciência, in partnership with Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Educational Institutions) carries out a research on the subject and in June will publish a Panel presenting all fronts of action and initiatives of our federal universities, their university hospitals, laboratories research and technological innovation, social and extension actions, monitoring systems and guidance for managers. The result of the mobilization of universities, in their various courses, not only in the area of ??health, has been an impressive biopolitical force, in guaranteeing rights and in defense of life, in the face of necropolitics that surrounds us – it is not by chance that public universities were one of the main targets of attacks by the obscurantism that presides over the country.

Among the reconfigurations, new arrangements and innovations implemented to act in the pandemic. Among many others, the expansion of actions in the field of telehealth stands out, encompassing a set of digital health initiatives and modalities.

Covid-19 has produced a new global impulse in telehealth, in view of the emergency need to carry out guidelines and triage to unburden the hospital system – already overcrowded and on the verge of collapse. In Brazil, public universities, since the first month of the pandemic, have been fundamental in the advancement of telehealth in various modalities, as well as in the development of applications and websites, in collaboration with SUS, and in distance care.

Thousands of students and faculty from the fields of medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, nutrition and psychology were mobilized. And, at the other end, students of information technology, computer science, engineering, design, communication and journalism, in the production of new software and apps, monitoring dashboards, data visualization, georeferencing and database development in real time .

In the survey carried out by SoU_Ciência, 59% of the federal universities declared that they had acted strongly in the advancement of telehealth and established new centers and systems in partnership with technology laboratories, city halls, state governments and, of course, with the SUS. The numbers presented in the chart below are dynamic and may grow with the change in the conjuncture, with a likely increase in telerehabilitation due to the long Covid, or even with data updates on the SoU_Ciência panel.

The modes of action are: teleorientation via phone calls, messages, emails and virtual platforms focusing on people in situations of social vulnerability, in preventing and coping with the pandemic; teletriage, verifying severity and conduct in each case, avoiding system overcrowding and referral for care when necessary; Call center carrying out consultations in the remote modality for patients suspected or with a positive diagnosis of Covid-19; specialized teleconsulting to meet the demands and doubts of primary care professionals and managers; telemonitoring in the monitoring of confirmed cases of Covid 19 of specific groups (such as the elderly or populations in vulnerable territories); and telerehabilitation with online physical activities, occupational therapy and physiotherapy in a preventive way (during the period of social isolation) and therapeutic for the post Covid (or long Covid).

Some examples show the capillarity of the initiatives. The Federal da Bahia (UFBA) established one of the largest service systems, the “Tele Coronavirus” in partnership with Fiocruz Bahia, mobilizing 1,200 students in the health area and 70 volunteer teachers. The Federal of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) created a teleorientation and self-service application that was used in several states, developed by its Laboratory of Technological Innovation in Health. Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES) had an award-winning project aimed at creating a tool to assist mental health professionals in the treatment of people who have developed social phobia triggered by the pandemic.

Federal de Lavras (UFLA) created a Virtual Outpatient Clinic and the Mais Saúde em Casa app. In turn, the Federal de Minas (UFMG) structured the Minas Gerais Teleassistance Network and the state’s telescreening system. Federal do Oeste da Bahia (UFOB) provided teleconsulting to SUS professionals who serve half a million inhabitants in the region. In the South, Federal de Pelotas (UFPel) and its startups Fácil Consulta and Ideorum-data health created a unified electronic

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medical record with teleconsultation.

In the interior of São Paulo, the Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar) promoted post-infection pulmonary telerehabilitation and online occupational therapy. The Federal do Tocantins (UFT) created the UMAnizando program to support isolated elderly people, with support that included shopping at supermarkets and pharmacies by volunteer students.

The mobilization of universities on all these fronts, with different areas of knowledge associating themselves in the development of technologies and systems, with the expansion of service teams and the training of students in real time, always under supervision, has brought fundamental advances in the training of professionals. and in the mass service to the population.

Unlike other temporary emergency actions, such as field hospitals, the expansion of telehealth must be consolidated in the SUS as a routine monitoring and support modality, fulfilling an important complementary role in prevention, guidance and care systems.

Acting in the fight against the virus, based on scientific evidence, organized as a public policy and committed to the defense of the Brazilian people, is a learning experience that will mark the history of the country, universities and, in particular, our students: a generation of young people professionals marked by the experience of this moment of national collective effort in defense of life.

In the next articles, we will comment on the role of universities in clinical and vaccine research, in supporting public schools, in the area of ??mental health, in the fight against poverty and hunger, in advising governments and managers, in the production of hospital equipment, among others. themes.

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