



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bolsonaro and drugs without scientific evidence: An old relationship

Bolsonaro y las drogas sin pruebas científicas: una vieja relación

Dear Editor,

The purchase, stock and distribution of the Covid-19 cocktail, having as a definitive solution the iconic (for the Brazilian president Bolsonaro and followers) hydroxychloroquine, or perhaps the vermifuge Ivermectin, among others, regardless of if it has no scientific evidence,¹ was the main action coordinated by the Brazilian government to face the pandemic. For this senseless plan to be put into practice it was necessary to dismiss two ministers of health, doctors, who refused to indicate medications without scientific proof as public health policy. It was necessary to find a minister who would submit to the insane orders of the President Bolsonaro and the current one has already said that he is there to obey because he has sense, not to do what is best for the health of the population.²

The president himself has already questioned what is the reason to run after a vaccine? This happened in the country with the second highest number of deaths in the world and with a strong growth in late 2020 and early 2021, because he would already have the solution long ago, his ill-fated (against Covid-19) chloroquine.³ For those who believe in his daydreams with medicine, it is good to know that this is not Bolsonaro's first illusion, and not the first time he has failed, of course; and, unfortunately, it seems that it will not be the last.

During his 30 years as a federal deputy, Bolsonaro presented very few projects to the federal chamber, among them the one that proposed the release of synthetic phosphoethanolamine for cancer treatment, together with a group of other deputies, including some of the workers' party (which he currently and conveniently demonizes), with the support of the then President Dilma Rousseff. Obviously without the endorsement of the National Health Surveillance Agency, the government agency responsible for the release of medicines.⁴ Bolsonaro's speech at the time elucidates his line of thought: "*Cancer has no party. The party of cancer is the graveyard. There are desperate people watching us*



now. I doubt that anyone here does not have a relative, a friend suffering from this disease. We can now give these people hope. (...) Worse than a bad decision is indecision.

The bill is available at https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?codteor=1440430. It originated from Members of Parliament from various political spectrums, many totally antagonistic ideologically today, but equally eager to make their populist mark with this unfounded promise. Needless to say that, unfortunately, people continued to die of cancer, some may have missed the correct treatments because of this folly, and those who were saved were not because of this drug, but because of treatments established by numerous researches and early diagnosis,⁵ fruit of exhaustive work of brilliant careers, and not because of political irresponsibility.

Lucky for Brazil, at the time of the project of the medicine that promised to cure cancer, Bolsonaro was not president, he would probably be suggesting that synthetic phosphoethanolamine would be the solution and not radio and chemotherapy in the fight against cancer. In early 2020, Bolsonaro went back to talking about the magic of cancer pill, fortunately, most of the civil and organized society did not pay attention to this old populist obsession of his. But recently (2020), the consequences were much more serious, as Brazil stops participating in the vaccination effort in a more forceful way, because according to the president, and many who follow him, it makes no sense to quickly seek the vaccine if we already have a cure and can prevent death with relative ease. The result was an explosion of the cases and deaths by Covid-19 in early 2021.⁶

At the time of the proposition of this project of the cancer pill there were not so many doctors and some scientists to follow their daydreams, in a mixture of ideological fanaticism and religion. In this context of complete foolishness, some Brazilian doctors point to the risks of vaccines developed so quickly, in an unprecedented effort in history that should be praised. Meanwhile, the leader of levity persists in his march and said that the best vaccine is the virus itself, attacking mayors and governors who act against the pandemic, despising the suffering of families who have lost loved ones, and finding a destination for his stock of chloroquine for the coming decades, which his irrational obsession has subjected such a serious health issue.⁷

It is, therefore, evident that Bolsonaro and those close to him are not interested in fighting diseases for a long time, their interest is to become an anti-science that has

messianic visions in relation to diseases, whether for cancer or for Covid-19. Even if for that Brazil is one of the countries with the highest number of daily deaths in the world in the pandemic of coronavirus, while the rest of the world manages to decrease the cases. But the rest of the world has already abandoned remedies without scientific proof and engaged, as in the Biden government of the United States of America, with mass vaccination; or with wide testing and coordinated social distancing, as in several Asian countries. All very different from what sadly occurs in a certain tropical country in Latin America.⁸

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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