

In defense of life, science, and solidarity

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We went through the most serious health crisis in the country's recent history, which challenged the world and, in Brazil, took on an even more serious and devastating shape due to the denialist federal management, which delayed the purchase of vaccines, did not coordinate a joint effort with the States, encouraged crowding, spread the use of ineffective medicines and mocked death and suffering, placing the Brazilian people in a situation of profound vulnerability and risk, bringing suffering to the entire population, but especially to health workers.

The duality between life and economy established by the highest authority in the country was criminal. Protecting life through measures guided by the scientific community was seen as relegating the people to their own fate, when in fact the one who was abandoning the people, subjecting them to hunger and the virus, was the government that did not guarantee emergency aid for people to be able to protect themselves in their own homes. The Brazilian government was negligent, and what's more, it acted intentionally with contempt for life and a lack of assistance, as has already been shown.

The spread of ineffective medicines, seeking to generate a false sense of security on the part of the population, which was intended to contradict and militate against social distancing, made the situation even more serious. We know that many of the deaths could have been avoided and that hurts us collectively as humanity. Each irresponsible action on the part of the federal government put health workers and workers in an even more difficult situation, with crowded hospitals, queues for beds and, sometimes, being forced to determine criteria on who to try to save. We live in dramatic moments with the need for isolation, with the fear of contamination and transmitting it to the family, with the fear of having to be hospitalized and not knowing if there would be beds available, with the scenes of pain and agony due to the lack of anesthetics or equipment. In this context, health professionals had no option to perform remote work, they were in the frontline, with exhausting journeys, living with suffering and death, without being able to receive the warmth of friends and family after work.

The pressure and stress these workers were subjected to was not easy. They were silent and

anonymous journeys, with faces protected by PPE that were sometimes insufficient, of women and black people, for the most part, made invisible in their fundamental roles of maintaining the Unified Health System (SUS) as the most fantastic and essential asset ever built, in a country fractured by profound social inequality. There were many who, after a day's work, shared small rooms with entire families, making any distance impossible.

As the Governor of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), our action was guided by the responsibility that Hans Jonas¹ mentioned in the article speaks out for the defense of life, science, solidarity, and the care that must be taken permanently, but especially in crisis contexts. The charges and pressures we suffered were great, especially to make scientific recommendations more flexible, but we could not falter in guaranteeing what was morally and ethically correct. Everything recovers, but life does not. I am proud of having been intransigent in the defense of life.

At a time when we could not even bury our dead, we know that the consequences of the pandemic are still present in the mourning for those we lost, in health conditions inherited from the disease, in the medical care we seek to give to COVID-19 orphans, in the stories and memories of the horror we lived through. We will never be the same after experiencing the pandemic. Our immense gratitude remains to health professionals, to those who enjoy or not the citizenship of health workers, as mentioned above, for having donated in the name of saving lives.

These women and men are true contemporary heroes and recording what they went through in the context of the pandemic is not only opportune and necessary, but also a way of doing justice.

¹ Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte. Centro Administrativo do Estado, Lagoa Nova. 59064-901 Natal RN Brasil. fatimabezerra@gac.rn.gov.br

References

1. Jonas H. *O Princípio Responsabilidade: ensaio de uma ética para a civilização tecnológica*. Trad: Lisboa M, Montez LB. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto; 2006.