



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The world haunted by Covid-19

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Abstract: In this time of confinement due to COVID-19 pandemic some reflections have been made and it has never been as clear as people can benefit from science. From the simple gesture of washing your hands like many others used during the quarantine, they have been identified by previous studies. In this way, we reinforce the need to maintain investments in the science.

Key words: coronavirus, pandemic, public health, evidence-based medicine

Carl Sagan published *"The Demon-Haunted World"* in 1995. In this book, he did not expect people to know the facts of science, but he highlighted how much the humans can gain from findings and belief in the science. Since the first case of new coronavirus pneumonia was diagnosed in Wuhan, China, at the end of December 2019, the Covid-19 has broken out all over the world and now approximately fifty days after the World Health Organization (WHO) have declared a pandemic, the numbers are expressive. More than 3.1 million people have been contaminated and we are approaching to 224,172 deaths (<https://covid19.who.int>).

Which learnings can it be extracted from Sagan's work for the Covid-19 pandemic? In 1909, Young published *"A brief sketch of Semmelweis and his work on puerperal sepsis"*. The text highlights the importance of Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis in asepsis measures and he mentioned that it was not long enough after the introduction of antisepsis in surgery by Lister, that the medical world made their practical application in obstetrics of the truths which Semmelweis had so clearly proclaimed many years before (Young 1909).

Semmelweis had shown that the fact that doctors washed their hands in the hospital prevented the death of parturient. Currently, this gesture, as simple as every day, has gained in recent weeks an incalculable value for being one of the most effective solutions to prevent contagion by the new coronavirus. This simple act of hand washing, like others, which has been systematically disseminated by the WHO, confronts essential concepts such as evidence-based medicine (Sackett 1997). The application of such elementary care, including quarantine, is often not observed even by some national governments (Usher 2020).

Some reflections attended at this time of the pandemic, such as, the speed in government decisions, the development of a telemedicine every day more effective, the development of medications and vaccines, the organization of health systems, necessarily go through concepts of evidence-based on medicine. And in this scenario, it is clear that financial investments in research cannot be discontinued and cut.

With the teachings of the pandemic, perhaps we can, as Sagan wrote, fully understand and recognize the beauty and power of science and conclude that his choice is a good deal for all

mankind. And then perhaps we may have a world not haunted by demons, but illuminated by science and solidarity among the nations. And finally, we should remember: the history of epidemics offers considerable advice, but only if people know the history and respond with wisdom (Jones, In Press).

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H. Martelli-Junior contributed to conception, design, data acquisition and interpretation, drafted and critically revised the manuscript. D.R.B. Martelli and R.A. Machado contributed to conception, design, data acquisition and interpretation and critically revised the manuscript. All authors gave their final approval and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

