

# The variants of COVID-19 and influenza as challenges for public health: necessary reflections



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Since 2019, the global population has been experimenting with new ways to live (or should we say survive?) amid a pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2. The challenges present in these two years were plural and affected people in different ways (physiologically, psychologically, socially, economically...).

Despite all these challenges, it is clear (for those who want to see it) that science has been decisive in controlling the disease. However, there are still many issues to be worked on, such as, for example, greater investment in research development centers, as well as a review of public policies so that they are more effective, especially in the context of improving vaccination coverage, which is still a matter of concern worldwide.

In addition to these points listed, unequal access to immunobiologicals is based on a reality that needs to be overcome and that unity between nations is necessary so that we can control the disease and minimize the possibilities of the emergence of new variants.

According to the World Health Organization - WHO (2021), vaccine equity will contribute to the end of the pandemic

quickly. Achieving the goals expected by the WHO with regard to vaccine equity will significantly increase global population immunity, protect health systems, enable the full recovery of economies, as well as reduce the risks of new emerging variants.

However, while this vaccine equity is not effective and the adherence to immunization does not expand, the new variants are leaving their marks and with that, there is a setback in the fight against this devastating virus.

Another problem that has been worrying health authorities and scientists is related to the spread of the H3N2 virus, which in turn is a variant of type A Influenza that had an increase in its spread in Brazil since the last quarter of 2021 (Ministry of Health, 2021).

In parallel with the spread of H3N2, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has been circulating in Brazil and has worried the world due to its rapid spread and the imminent risk of overloading health systems once again.

In this scenario presented, the importance of vaccination to contain the emergence of new variants is highlighted. Scientists are already working on immunobiologicals that

are effective in protecting people against these circulating strains in our country and in the world.

In the meantime, the power that the population has in their hands and that effectively contributes to the prevention of the aforementioned diseases corresponds to health awareness: isolation in case of respiratory symptoms, use of masks, hand hygiene, not being in agglomerations and taking vaccines.

In the field of health promotion and disease prevention, Primary Health Care (PHC) services constitute an important tool that, in addition to providing care, can develop health education actions, active searches for vaccination and the approach of symptomatic people existing in the territories under their responsibility.

Based on the facts presented, it is expected that strategic actions will be carried out so that vaccine equity occurs, that governments, especially the Brazilian one, value science and provide conditions for Brazilian researchers to work towards the end of this pandemic and other problems that plague our society. ■

## REFERENCES

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