

EDITORIAL

# The effect of negationism on public health

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**Abstract**

Negacionism refers to the choice to deny a scientifically proven reality, which can reduce life expectancy and quality of life. Within this context, the uncontrolled trajectory of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil has generated great concern due to the lack of consensus on how to manage the pandemic in a scenario of denial of the seriousness of the disease by the government, since on August 2nd, 2021, there are 556,437 Brazilians killed due to the disease. The denial of COVID-19 and the immunizing agent is another pandemic and turns the current scenario into a syndemic.

**Keywords:** negacionism, COVID-19, vaccine

The meaning of negacionism is the choice to deny a scientifically proven reality<sup>1</sup>. This concept, applied to the community, can be harmless and serve as anecdotes, as is the case of the hypotheses that consider earthworks. Even with several very well-developed scientific evidence since the time of Galileo and with daily NASA images released around the world<sup>2</sup>, there is a group that denies this fact and seeks to contest the non-flat shape of the Earth.

On the other hand, negacionism can also reduce life expectancy and quality of life. Within this context, the uncontrolled trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil has generated great concern due to the lack of consensus on the management of the pandemic in a scenario of denial of the seriousness of the disease by the government.

Pharmacological compounds have been considered miraculous against SARS-CoV-2, including hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin. These compounds have been proposed in view of their antiviral effects in certain situations against other virus species. However, clinical trials with a very strong level of evidence showed that these drugs have no effect on the symptoms of the disease, in addition to not improving essential parameters such as mortality and length of stay<sup>3-5</sup>.

Despite these results being widely publicized, a large portion of the population, including health professionals, continue to believe in the treatment of COVID-19 with these pharmacological compounds.

Another worrying condition is the growth of the anti-vaccine movement<sup>6</sup>, especially with vaccines against

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COVID-19. An idea was created that vaccine methods that use messenger RNA and viral vector were developed in less than a year with the intention of alarming the population that these vaccines would not be safe. Both vaccine platforms mentioned have been researched for some years<sup>7-10</sup>. In addition, clinical trials carried out with these vaccines have shown safety, efficacy and the results recommend their application based on the risk/benefit ratio.

Denying proven facts is harmful to public health, as it negatively impacts disease control. Therefore, a healthy, coherent, and respectful relationship between scientists, educators, press, population, and government entities is essential for the extinction of denial.

As highlighted by Abreu<sup>11</sup>, place of residence, socioeconomic status, discrimination, and inequality within and between countries contribute to early mortality and significant morbidities, particularly in environments with limited resources, especially in families that are in a situation of vulnerability. It is everyone's duty to make efforts not to miss out on opportunities to fill the inequality gap. Public health decision-making is critical to ensuring that no one is left behind.

In this line, Journal of Human Growth and Development brings articles<sup>12-28</sup> that contribute to the development of science, full knowledge of public health and evidence in the scientific field to corroborate scientific practice and its full application in modern society.

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