



Is it Possible to Project the end of the Pandemic? Outlook for Brazil

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Opinion

Most people's question is: When will the Covid-19 pandemic end? It is not yet possible to predict, but in Brazil we saw progress towards normality during the first quarter of 2022. According to research, in recent months, important developments have been shown. We have growing evidence that vaccines are effective, as real-world data in Brazil validate the results of clinical trials, showing a marked reduction in hospitalizations and severe forms of the disease, as well as deaths. Vaccination coverage is increasing. Immunization programs have accelerated, especially in the most remote regions of the country. In recent months, more than 2 million doses have been applied per day, which reflects a greater acceptance, as well as an increase in the adoption of the vaccine. According to experts, more vaccines are on the way, some of which are now in Phase III trials. All this makes it increasingly clear that Brazil will have enough doses to vaccinate all adults in a few months, assuming that no major vaccine would be withdrawn from circulation. In addition, vaccine trials in children are ongoing, which would increase the population that could potentially contribute to reducing community circulation of the virus. A new wave of anti-COVID-19 therapies, with antibodies for example, notably those produced by pharmaceutical companies Eli Lilly, Merck–Ridgeback and Vir Biotechnology, have produced positive data or received authorization for emergency use in some countries, suggesting that these treatments have the potential to reduce hospitalizations and deaths, accelerating the transition to normality. Therapy is poised to make more of a difference.

Cases

New cases and deaths are lower but still high. New cases,

hospitalizations and deaths have dropped dramatically and this trajectory has expanded discussions of a transition to normality in several countries, the slope of the curve is still fragile, however much of the decline followed restrictions and social distancing measures, but such measures and other non-pharmacological interventions are still confusing and difficult to get right, and even now, several countries are experiencing increased cases, with the new viral variant in circulation. It is increasingly clear that more infectious variants of concern could lead to a new wave of cases in the coming months. Brazil is in a relatively favorable position, cases are decreasing despite the high prevalence of the gamma variant (P.1), suggesting that the country is on alert and may have an ability to control the spread of other more infectious variants. In contrast, the United States and parts of the European Union appear to have an increasing prevalence of the British strain B.1.1.7. The potential for a wave of cases in the United States driven by variants and continued spread in Europe in the coming months is real.

Variants

Variants can also reduce the effectiveness of vaccines or allow reinfection. Data from the AstraZeneca vaccine trial in South Africa highlights the potential for variants such as B.1.351 and P.1 to reduce their effectiveness. Other vaccine data, including those from Novax and Johnson & Johnson, show a more modest reduction in effectiveness, especially against serious disease caused by these variants. There is also early evidence of independently arising mutations in the United States that can reduce the effectiveness of vaccines. These initial findings are based on very small sample sizes and may change as more information becomes available. We still don't know the impact of vaccines against serious diseases from these strains. But if these results

hold, the spread of strains against which existing vaccines are substantially less effective would be a significant risk to lives and could delay the end of the pandemic.

Pandemic

As for the end of the pandemic, scientists and historians say people will decide when it will end, long before any governing body declares it. If society tries to declare an end

to the pandemic before science does, we will be accepting its grave results - including death. This has often been the case with previous pandemics. Here in Brazil, the bodies responsible for disease control and prevention will likely provide guidance once the pandemic reaches endemic status. This, in turn, will offer a path back to some version of normal life, regardless of global claims.