

Dangerous profession



Hundreds of thousands of health workers face this health crisis since the early days.
Photo: File/RHC

By Guillermo Alvarado

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted most of the world's population, to the extent that there are very few who do not have a friend, acquaintance or relative who has fallen ill with the new coronavirus, or who has lost the fight for life.

No one, however, like the health personnel, doctors, nurses, assistants, laboratorians and many others, have come face to face with the damage caused by this disease that has somehow altered what we considered normal life until recently.

I am reminded of that passage in the novel *The Plague*, by the Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus, where the protagonist, Dr. Rieux, recognizes that for the physician, victories over death are always provisional, but that this is not a reason to stop fighting.

In this spirit, hundreds of thousands of health workers around the world have been facing this health crisis since the early days, and it must be said that they are paying a very high price.

According to the director of the World Health Organization, WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, between 80,000 and 180,000 health professionals have lost their lives since the beginning of the pandemic and May 2021.

This is, of course, a count that is below the reality because there are many countries where the statistics linked to the disease are unreliable, according to a recent communiqué from the entity.

Ghebreyesus called for health workers to be prioritized at all times in vaccination plans, because they are on the front line of the virus and the success of all collective efforts depends to a large extent on them.

The data provided by 119 countries lead to the conclusion that two out of every five professionals in this field are fully immunized, but as is the case with all statistics, huge inequalities can hide behind them.

Thus, for example, the WHO director general pointed out that in Africa, vaccination barely reaches one in ten people involved in health work, and the situation in other underdeveloped areas of the world is not very different, especially due to the lack of access to these biopreparations.

He denounced that some tools, such as the COVAX mechanism, designed to alleviate inequalities between rich and poor, do not work because industrialized nations and laboratories did not fulfill their offers.

The G-20 promised to deliver more than 1.2 billion doses to COVAX and has only delivered 150 million, which is obviously too little to protect the prioritized sectors, including health.

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