

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCIENCE FOR THE DEFENSE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LIFE

With the advance of vaccination around the world – although disproportionately and unequally, when comparing rich and poor regions – we see new perspectives for the resumption of activities, amidst intense discussion about the future of the post-pandemic mankind.

In this context, science – with its methodologies, trials, processes, stages and discoveries – becomes even more one of the key elements for the maintenance of life. Studies and research on Covid enabled the development of several vaccines to face the pandemic.

Yet, there is still much to be discovered and understood about the new coronavirus and its variants, on the long-term sequelae of Covid-19, new contaminations, and vaccine effectiveness, among other questions that demand increasingly accurate and complex responses.

Knowing scientific production, understanding its stages and monitoring its advances proved to be fundamental for the population's acceptance to Covid-19 immunization. Therefore, the importance of the effort to translate the scientific terms and processes into a communication that can reach the general population.

This edition of the newsletter Conexão Saúde - de Olho do Corona (Health Connection - Keeping an Eye on Corona) seeks that goal and presents, in a didactic way, the research process lead by Fiocruz in Maré on the effectiveness of the vaccine and how it protects the population collectively and individually. The study is conducted in a partnership with the NGO Redes da Maré and the Municipal Health Department.

To highlight the importance of keeping science close to the population, the study deals with the historical relationship between Fiocruz and peripheral territories – both urban and rural. To recall achievements and actions that enabled Fiocruz to conduct the study in Maré, we interviewed Valcler Rangel, public health doctor and Institutional Relations Advisor at Fiocruz.

We wish you a good reading!

Gabi Lino/Conexão Saúde

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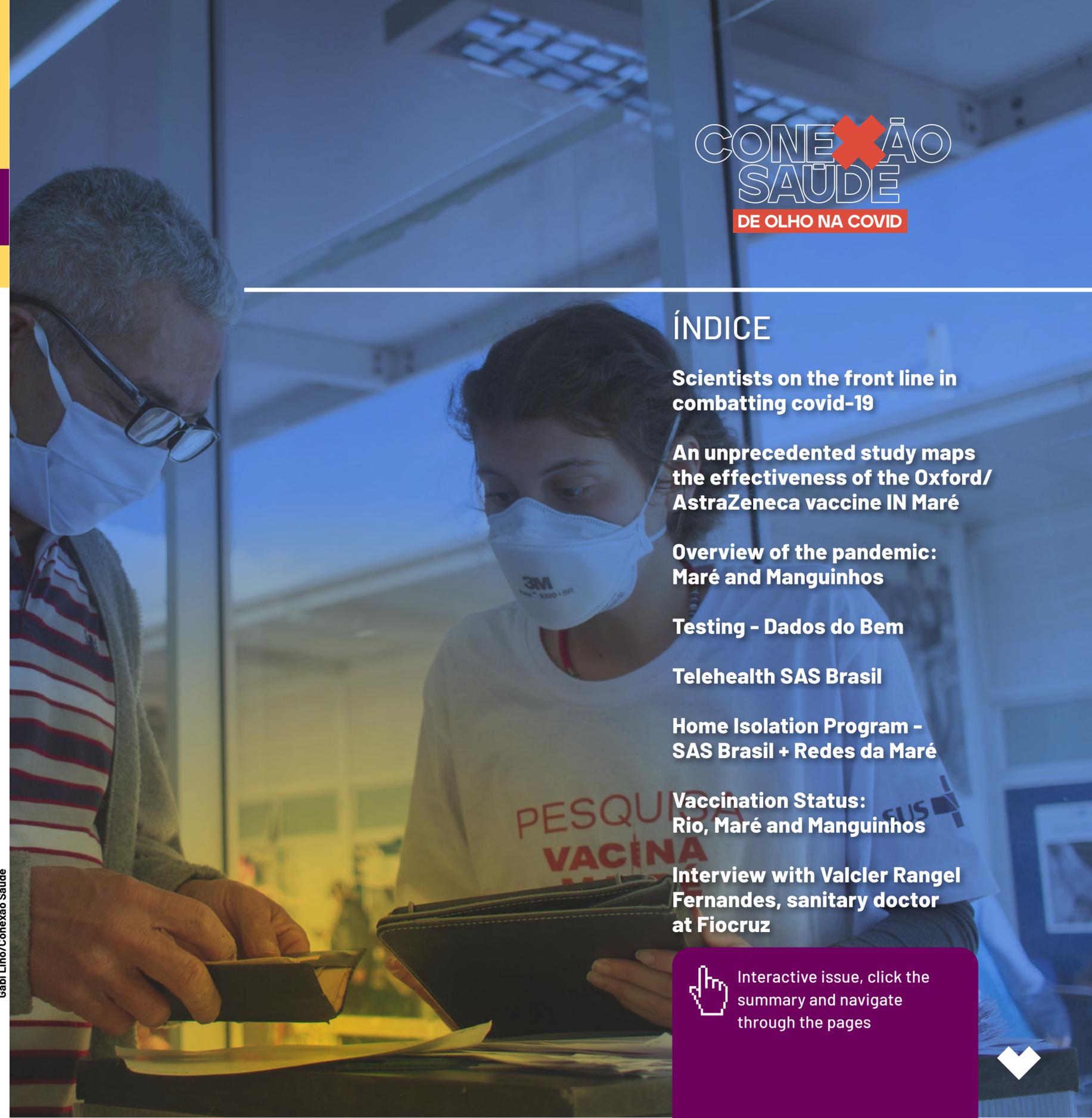
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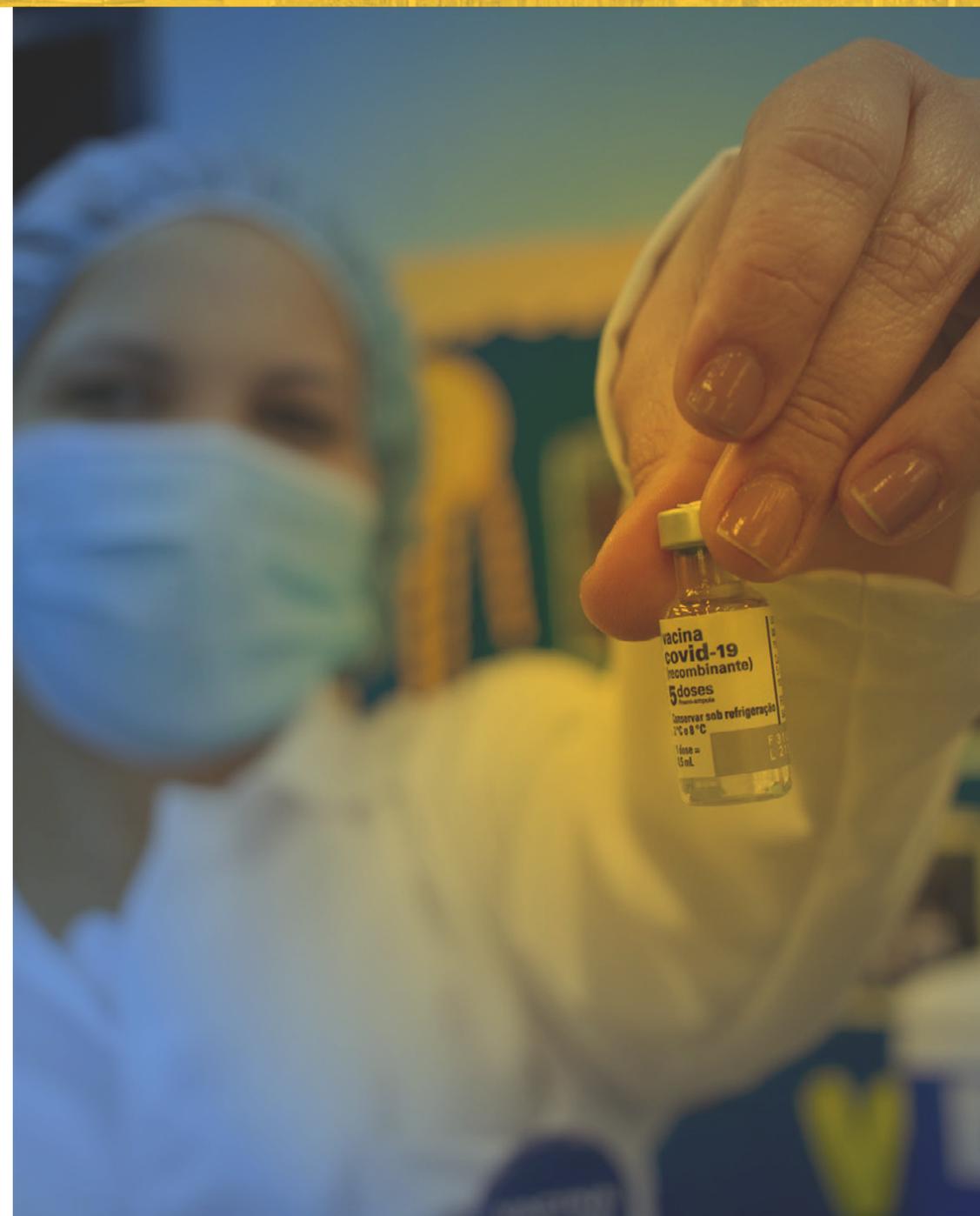
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SCIENTISTS ON THE FRONT LINE IN COMBATTING COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic will have global impacts on society that are unprecedented and not yet fully dimensioned. Although the world has already experienced other historical periods marked by epidemics, coronavirus is being disseminated in a much larger scenario of integration among countries, division of labor and population density, when compared to past human experiences.

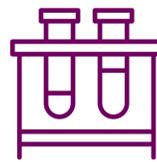
Regardless of the advances in research developed over nearly two years of pandemic, we still have preliminary information and knowledge about the behavior of the virus. Studies on mutations and the emergence of new variants, transmission potential, sequelae in the organism of those infected and the effectiveness of vaccines complement each other and provide new pieces to solve this puzzle, still being put together. Therefore, scientific production is fundamental and decisive to better understand the virus and its consequences and to seek solutions.



Gabi Lino/Conexão Saúde

After much effort from researchers and scientists from Brazil and the world, it was possible to develop vaccines in record time, while still following strict protocols, repeated tests and studies. According to Fiocruz, clinical trials for the development of new vaccines take around 10 to 15 years if the classic procedures are used. However, the complexity and urgency of the pandemic have demanded the acceleration of studies and circulation of vaccines, since these are the only effective alternative to combat the high lethality produced by the new coronavirus.

Studies on vaccine efficacy are currently in the phase that assesses the success of approved Covid-19 vaccines in the population, which is called phase 4. Solid results brought by these studies are not expected in less than two years; nonetheless, they are already beginning to show significant responses, including in Brazil, where data shows an expressive and progressive decrease in deaths in the vaccinated population.



PHASES IN CLINICAL TRIALS

PHASE 1 The vaccine being studied is administered to a small number of people (often from 10 to 100 research participants) to test safety and dosage, as well as to assess its initial ability to stimulate the immune system;

PHASE 2 The vaccine is administered to hundreds of people (often ranges from 100 to 1,000 research participants) to obtain more data on safety, as well as to assess the vaccine's ability to stimulate the immune system (efficacy);

PHASE 3 The vaccine is administered to thousands of people (often more than 1,000), in order to confirm its efficacy and to learn more about adverse reactions in various groups of individuals (children and elders, for example). These tests can determine whether the vaccine protects against the Covid-19 virus ;

PHASE 4 Testing of results after the vaccine is administered to the population. Hundreds of thousands to millions of people.



Douglas Lopes/Redes da Maré

In different regions of Brazil, such as **Botucatu (SP)**, **Viana (ES)** e **Paquetá (RJ)**, are developing studies on the effectiveness of the Oxford/ AstraZeneca vaccine, that is: they are performing an evaluation to understand how the vaccine works in the real world. These studies combine mass vaccination, the follow-up of the immune response, and the genetic sequencing of the new coronavirus.

Similar to these previous experiences, a series of studies led by Fiocruz began in the Maré favelas, on the impact of Covid-19 vaccination on its population. The initiative is a collaboration between Redes da Maré and the City of Rio de Janeiro, through the Municipal Health Department. Having in mind the peculiarities found in favelas and peripheral territories, the study aims to focus on the direct effectiveness of vaccines in protecting against the virus and its variants, but it also enables the evaluation of other dimensions of the pandemic impact on a territory such as Maré.

AN UNPRECEDENTED STUDY MAPS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OXFORD/ASTRAZENECA VACCINE IN MARÉ

The study on the effectiveness of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine led by Fiocruz in Maré is based on two main pillars: mass vaccination and large-scale testing. Since June 2020, the project “Conexão Saúde: de olho na Covid” has conducted several actions of outreach, surveillance, and health care, combining testing and telehealth services and safe home isolation with strategic communication throughout the territory. Thus, it has become a reference of the fight against the pandemic in favelas. Such study that evaluates the effectiveness of the vaccine is a ramification of this process.

It began at the end of August, with the campaign #VacinaMaré, which accelerated the first dose of the vaccine for the adult population who lives in this group of favelas. Thus, the research includes two lines of action, presented as Study 1 and Study 2, which will be conducted simultaneously.

STUDY 1

Study 1 works with a negative, case-control test design to evaluate the effectiveness of the AstraZeneca vaccine in reducing the risk of Covid-19 infection. This study will be conducted by recording the results of the RT-PCR test for SARS-COV-2 of Maré residents who seek a public healthcare facility and/or Covid-19 testing centers in Maré from July 2021 to January 2022.

It consists of the identification of symptomatic individuals who have taken the RT-PCR test and tested positive (case) and negative (control) for Covid-19. The test result will be cross-checked with the monitoring of the vaccination status and the clinical outcome, classifying the final severity. The effectiveness will be measured by comparing the risk of confirmed SARS-COV-2 infection between the group that was vaccinated during the intervention and the unvaccinated control group. Then, it will be possible to measure the protection provided to the population by the vaccine.

Through active search, the study teams are also monitoring the testing in three Basic Public Healthcare Facilities in Maré: Adib Jatene, Augusto Boal and Diniz Batista. All positive results are being sent for genetic sequencing, in order to identify possible variants of the virus and collaborate with genomic surveillance in the region.



STUDY 2

Study 2 is a population cohort study of 2,000 families living in Maré, totaling approximately 8,000 individuals, with follow-up for 6 months, for the evaluation of seroprevalence, proportion of vaccinated individuals and occurrence of cases. Unlike Study 1, which includes all Maré residents tested at the healthcare facilities and at Maré's testing center, Study 2 has a selected scope of participants. In essence, the cohort study is an observational study in which individuals are classified (or selected) according to the status of exposure (exposed and unexposed) and are followed up to assess the incidence of the disease in a given period of time.

THE STUDY IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PHASES:

1

BASELINE

2

Testing 3 months thereafter

3

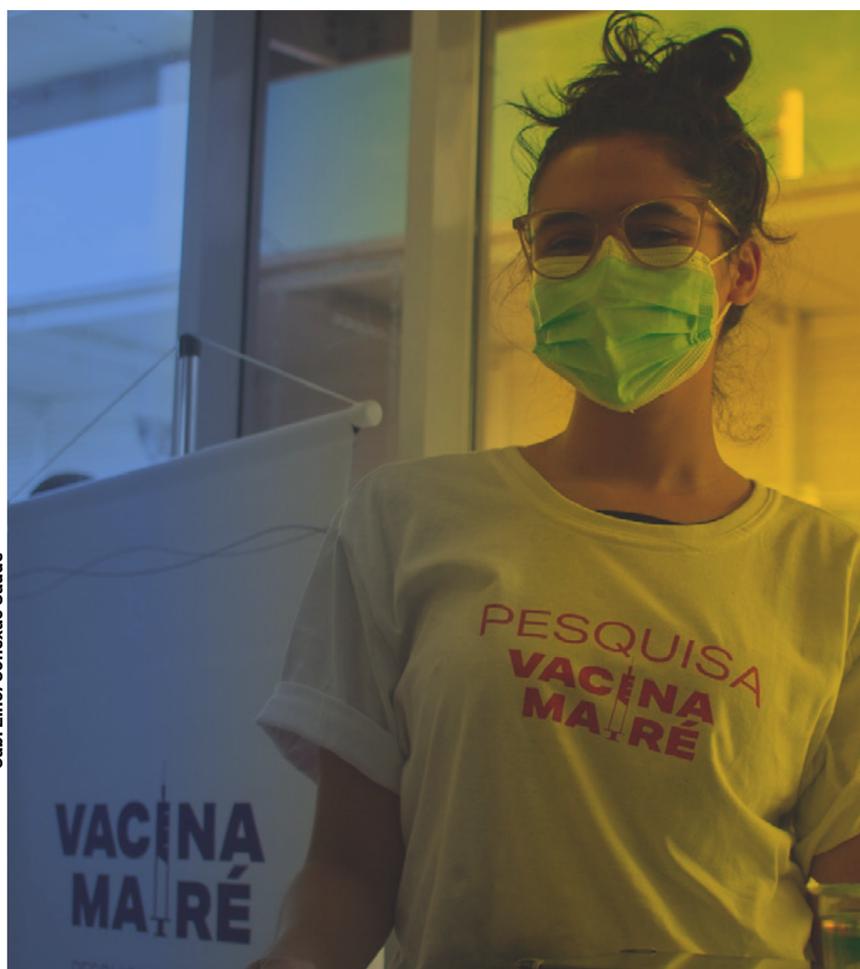
Testing 6 months thereafter

The current phase is baseline, in which the professionals involved are working to collect data from residents through a questionnaire (sociodemographic data) and a health inventory.

The selection of research participants was conducted using two preexisting registration instruments: the database of the Maré Diz Não ao Coronavírus (Maré Says No to Coronavirus) Campaign, carried out by Redes da Maré for the registration of families who applied to receive food baskets and hygiene kits, and preregistrations carried out in the vaccination campaign in residents' associations and primary healthcare facilities.



The work process consists of home visits from a territorial facilitator and a community health agent (agente comunitário de saúde) to registered persons. As residents agree to participate in the research, the team applies the questionnaire and conducts the serological tests on all family members, who will be monitored for a period of 6 months and will repeat the test each quarter for prevalence assessment.



THE OBJECTIVES OF STUDY 2 ARE:

[1] to evaluate the direct effect (effectiveness) of vaccination strategies in use in the Maré territory in light of the confirmed SARS-COV-2 infections;

[2] to estimate the indirect protection (herd immunity) conferred by population vaccination;

[3] to verify the incidence of severe adverse events of special interest after vaccination against Covid-19;

[4] to describe the prevalence of SARS-COV-2 variants in cases occurring at the study site and

[5] to describe the epidemiology of Covid-19 in the area before and during the study period. The identification of the presence of antibodies in the vaccinated population of Maré and the analysis of the acquired immunity duration throughout the research period are expected, as a first result.

Researchers point out that the TND (Test-Negative Design for Covid-19), the basis of Study 1 developed at Maré, offers logistical advantages over other study designs (case-control and cohort) because it can be conducted in countries with surveillance systems and existing electronic medical records, reducing costs and improving efficiency. This statement draws attention to the potential of the Brazilian Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS).

Public Health Surveillance, one of the pillars of SUS, is a continuous and systematic process of collecting, consolidating, analyzing and disseminating data on health-related events, aiming at the planning and implementation of public health measures to protect the health of the population and to prevent and control risks, health problems and diseases that qualify the studies in the field of health. Therefore, it is important to reaffirm that both the planning and the execution of studies on the effectiveness of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine in Maré are only possible because of the connection with the existing SUS structure in the territory.

The cohort methodology, the basis of Study 2, also offers important advantages for the study. We highlight the ability of researchers from the study cohorts to be free to study more than one outcome. As the observation unit is the individual, the monitoring enables the detection of changes that occurred in all study participants.



THE STUDY SITE: THE GROUP OF FAVELAS IN MARÉ

According to the Maré Census (2013), the group of favelas in Maré was consolidated in the 1940s. The Guanabara Bay and three important highways of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Linha Vermelha, Linha Amarela and Brazil Avenue, intersect its geography. The Set formed by 16 favelas gathers about 140 thousand inhabitants distributed in 47,758 households that occupy an area of 4.3 km². With this configuration, Maré is larger than 96.4% of Brazilian cities, having the population size of an average city. Also according to the Maré Census (2013), the population of the territory is mostly black and female. In terms of gender, more than 50% of the residents are women and 62% declared themselves black and brown.

The different forms of mobilization of residents and the political impact processes developed by the civil society organizations formed in Maré resulted in a series of public policies on access to water, sanitation, education, health, art and culture. In Maré, for example, there are 50 public education facilities that serve more than 16,000 children, a higher number than those of some cities entirely.

Regarding access to healthcare, Maré has three Municipal Health Centers and four Family Health Clinics. Regarding emergency care, since 2007 the neighborhood has a prompt-service or emergency clinic (unidade de pronto atendimento - UPA). Fiocruz played a vital role in the establishment of the initial structure of primary health care in the territory. The experiences and training programs of community agents in the 1980s strengthened the debate on public health as a right.

Within this context, Maré emerges as a site with peculiar characteristics, which gathers capacity for rapid and intense organization and mobilization, with institutions, communicators, leaders and public equipment engaged in the actions of the territory; population density and characteristics of a medium-sized Brazilian city; positive and consistent results in fighting the pandemic - based on the Conexão Saúde - De Olho na Covid project; and a population widely vaccinated with one dose, with the prospect of reaching expressive numbers in the adherence to the second dose, with the next stage of the #VacinaMaré campaign - being a unique territory for carrying out the research led by Fiocruz.



OTHER STUDIES ON THE VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS IN BRAZIL

We highlight three studies on the effectiveness of AstraZeneca vaccine conducted in Brazil: in Viana (ES), Botucatu (SP) and Paquetá (RJ). All of them present preliminary results on the development of antibodies and reduction of cases and deaths among the vaccinated population.

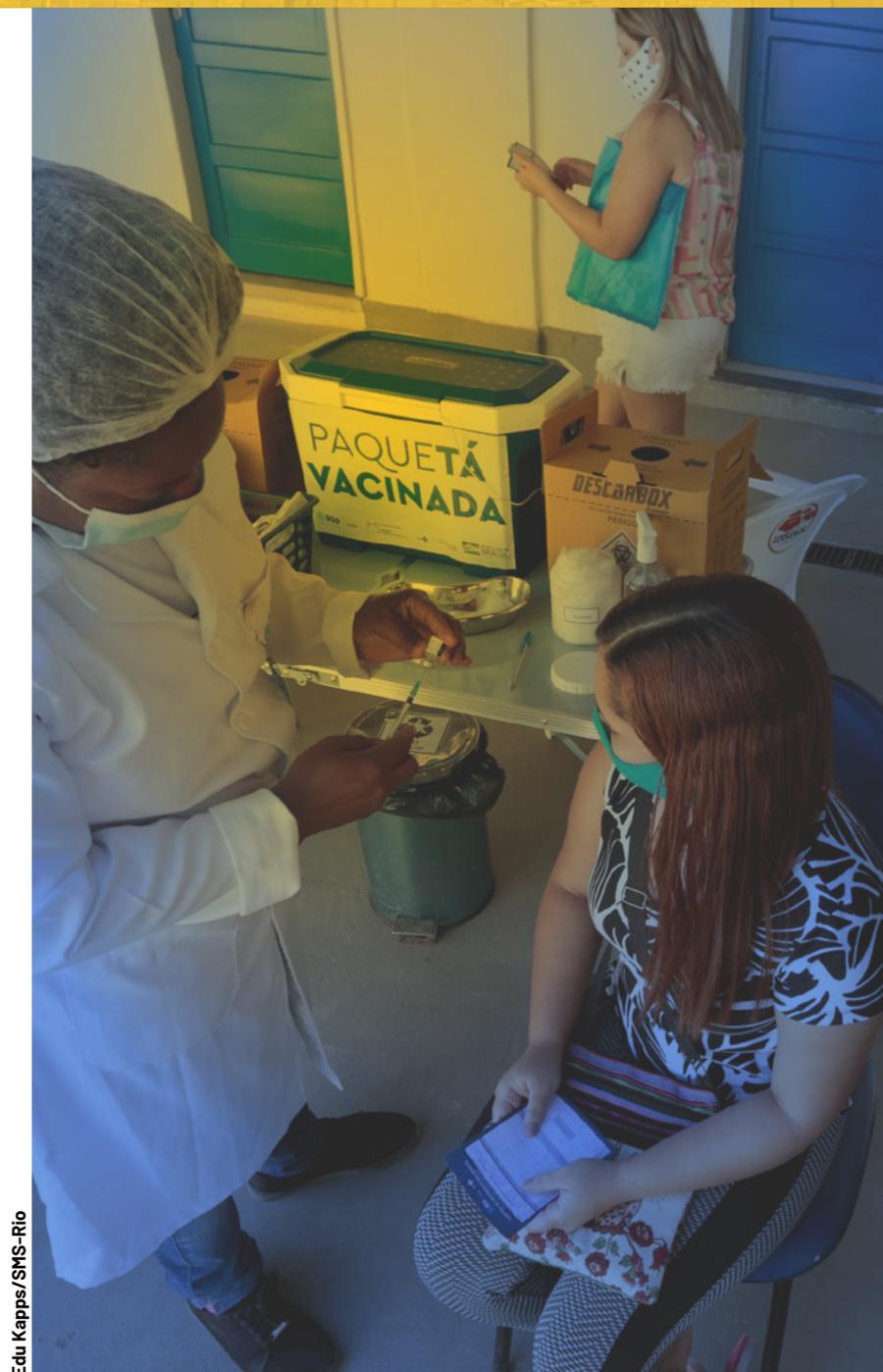
The study in **Viana (ES)**, a municipality in the metropolitan region of Vitória, which began in June 2021, is part of a partnership between the government of Espírito Santo and the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES) and aims to evaluate the efficacy of AstraZeneca's half dose of producing antibodies that make the virus harmless to the organism (neutralizing antibodies).

An article published in G1 in August shows the preliminary results of the study. In the first phase, 19,000 people between 18 and 49 years old received the first dose of the vaccine in a mass vaccination campaign and, 28 days after application, no death was recorded in the municipality.

From the analysis of a group of about 500 people among the more than 19,000 vaccinated, three important preliminary results could be identified:

- [1]** 85% reduction in the number of reported cases of Covid-19 (when comparing the current time with the peak of the pandemic in April of this year);
- [2]** 80% of people who received the vaccine have acquired sufficient antibodies to protect the body from the virus and
- [3]** 3% of people who had no antibodies before the vaccine have developed antibodies at protective levels.

New preliminary results released on April 4th, three months after the vaccine administration, show that the half dose of the immunizing agent induced antibodies in 99.8% of the study participants. The research continues with the monitoring of the immune response of volunteers six months and one year after receiving the immunizing agent. If the antibody rate drops over the period, participants will receive booster doses.



Edu Kapps/SMS-Rio



On **Paquetá Island (RJ)**, the study started with mass testing three days before the vaccination campaign, to identify the presence of antibodies. About 2,759 people signed up for testing, equivalent to 70% of the island's residents. For the study, residents were divided into three groups: under 18 years old (not yet vaccinated); over 18 years old not yet vaccinated and over 18 years old already vaccinated.

According to the Municipal Health Department of Rio de Janeiro, the first results of the study indicate that the vaccine had a satisfactory level of collective protection after the first dose.

Analyzing the group of people who had already been vaccinated before mass immunization, it was possible to observe 90% of seropositivity for antibodies against the pathogen that causes Covid-19. Another important result revealed by the study is that 40% of adults and 21% of children and adolescents who had not yet been vaccinated had antibodies – which, in this case, means exposure to the virus, since this group was not immunized by vaccination.

According to people conducting the research, the data is being revised for the publication of a definitive version, but it is possible to affirm that the vaccine has good ability to create antibodies against the virus in the first dose. Although preliminary results are positive, the researchers state that the effective impact of the immunizing agent on the rates of cases and deaths can only be measured at the end of the study.

In the study in **Botucatu (SP)**, according to an article published in the FAPESP journal in May 2021, almost 100% of residents between 18 and 60 years old received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The second dose was administered to 74,000 research participants in August and the objective of the project is to analyze the effectiveness of the immunizing agent and monitor any adverse effects. In addition to vaccination, the research provides for population testing and genomic sequencing of the virus. Mass vaccination in the municipality is part of an effectiveness project that is being conducted by the Ministry of Health and the City of Botucatu, with the University of Oxford, Fiocruz, the São Paulo State University (Unesp), the AstraZeneca laboratory, The Federal University of Sao Paulo (Unifesp) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Preliminary results from the Botucatu study also showed positive effects of mass immunization. According to the Ministry of Health, after the administration of the first dose of the z vaccine, the number of Covid-19 cases in the city fell by 80% and the number of hospital admissions due to the disease, by 86.7%. The final results of the study are expected for February 2022.



OVERVIEW OF THE PANDEMIC: MARÉ AND MANGUINHOS

TESTING - MARÉ

	Samples		Positive Tests	
	CUMULATIVE TOTAL		CUMULATIVE TOTAL	% OF POSITIVES
PCR	28.076	PCR	3.685	13%
SEROLOGICAL	7.776	SEROLOGICAL	2.761	35%

TESTING - MANGUINHOS

	Samples		Positive Tests	
	CUMULATIVE TOTAL		CUMULATIVE TOTAL	% OF POSITIVES
PCR	5.474	PCR	781	15
SEROLOGICAL	663	SEROLOGICAL	166	25

TELEHEALTH SAS BRASIL

The service provided by SAS Brazil in Maré began on 7/3. The data listed below was collected until 10/4.

MARÉ



TELEHEALTH CONSULTATIONS

10.403



PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS

3.462



TOTAL NUMBER OF CONSULTATIONS

13.865

MANGUINHOS



TELEHEALTH CONSULTATIONS

250



PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS

55



TOTAL NUMBER OF CONSULTATIONS

345

HOME ISOLATION PROGRAM REDES DA MARÉ + (SAS BRASIL)



NUMBER OF PERSONS INCLUDED IN THE SAFE ISOLATION PROGRAM IN THE LAST 30 DAYS

1.218



NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOCIAL TEAM

75



ACTIVE CASES BEING MONITORED

29

1.195 EVALUATION FORMS WERE APPLIED AMONG PEOPLE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PROGRAM

98%

OF PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ISOLATION FOR 14 DAYS OR MORE (UNTIL 10/4)

VACCINATION STATUS: RIO, MARÉ AND MANGUINHOS

VacinaMaré campaign was an important development of the Conexão Saúde: de olho na Covid-19 project and the kickoff for Fiocruz studies. The campaign anticipated the first dose vaccination for adults living in the group of favelas in August and, in October, the same happened with the second dose. The first phase of the campaign reached 36,000 people in four days, contributing to a total of 155,173 doses administered in the health units of Maré from the start of vaccination until 09/30.

Until the end of September, vaccination coverage of the first dose had reached about 82% of the total population of Maré, considering all age groups. A number close to the capital's number, which is 83% of the population with the first dose of the vaccine. In relation to full immunization, considering a second dose or single dose, this number reached 37% of the adult population in Maré and 50.5% in the municipality. The booster dose also started to be administered at Maré, aimed at elderly people aged 77 or older, health workers and health professionals aged 60 or older, people with a high degree of immunosuppression aged 12 or older and people aged 60 or older who took the second dose in the city of Rio de Janeiro until March 31.

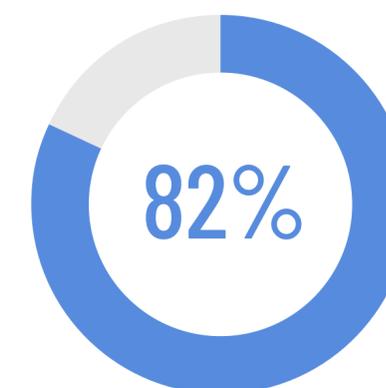
VACCINE DOSES ADMINISTERED AT THE HEALTH UNITS OF MARÉ FROM THE START OF VACCINATION UNTIL 9/30

UNIDADE	TOTAL DOSES
CF ADIB JATENE	28,382
CF AUGUSTO BOAL	25,200
CF DINIZ BATISTA DOS SANTOS	25,567
CF JEREMIAS MORAES DA SILVA	25,635
CMS AMERICO VELOSO	19,146
CMS JOAO CANDIDO	6,239
CMS VILA DO JOAO	25,004
Total	155,173

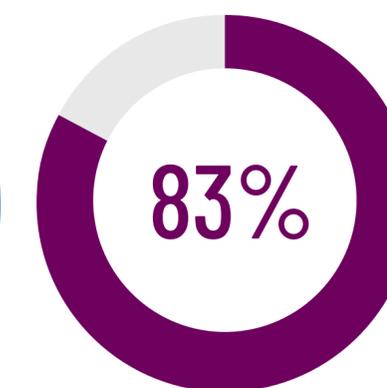


VACCINATION COVERAGE - FIRST DOSE

Maré



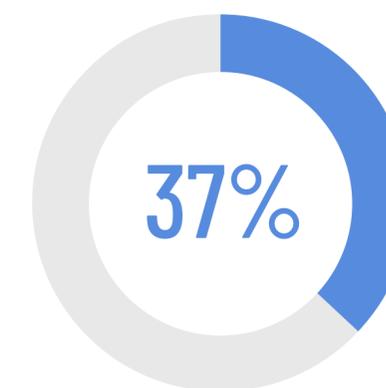
Municipality of Rio



Total population, considering all age groups

VACCINATION COVERAGE - FULL IMMUNIZATION

Maré



Municipality of Rio

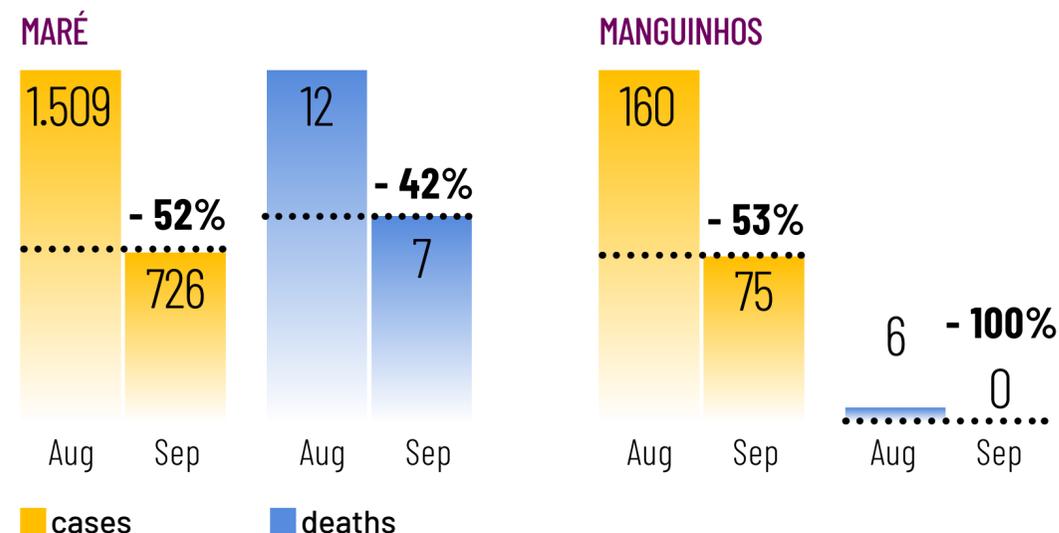


Adult population, over 18 years old



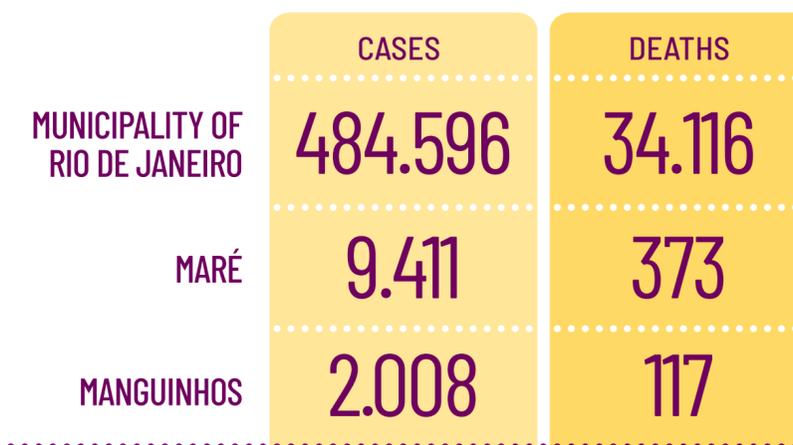
The population of Maré is made up of 31% of children and adolescents and 23% of young people aged 18 to 23 years, a fact that impacts vaccination coverage, considering the vaccination schedule by age group, especially regarding the second dose of the vaccine. Thus, when we observe vaccination coverage separately by age group, 53% of the adults in Maré have already received the second dose, while in the municipality the coverage is 66% for the same age group.

CASES AND DEATHS NOTIFICATIONS IN MARÉ AND IN MANGUINHOS



With the advance of vaccination, there impact on notifications of cases and deaths by Covid-19. In the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, according to the Rio COVID-19 Panel administered by the City Administration, the risk map shows moderate risk in all neighborhoods.

CASES AND DEATHS ACCORDING TO RIO COVID-19 PANEL (UNTIL 10/3)



VACCINE DOSES ADMINISTERED IN MARÉ BY AGE GROUP

AGE GROUP	1ª DOSE	2ª DOSE OR SD	BOOSTER DOSE	POPULATION	VACCINE COVERAGE	
					Partially	Fully
<12	8	6	1	26,375	0.0%	0.0%
12-17	11,043	10	1	13,730	80.4%	0.1%
18-29	31,608	4,099	2	30,374	104.1%	13.5%
30-39	21,329	5,391	1	22,951	92.9%	23.5%
40-49	15,528	13,231	9	16,514	94.0%	80.1%
50-59	13,345	11,997	7	10,800	123.6%	111.1%
60+	13,678	13,229	650	9,026	151.5%	146.6%
Total	106,539	47,963	671	129,770	82%	37%

It is noteworthy that, for the impact on the reduction of notifications to be even greater, it is necessary that the entire population has the complete vaccination scheme. It is expected that 28% of the population vaccinated during the #VacinaMaré campaign will **return for the 2nd dose in the coming days (October 14,15 and 16)**. However, 6,813 Maré residents should have returned to the health units to receive the 2nd dose and have not yet done so.



“Doing research cannot be treated as something outlandish. The search for knowledge is for everyone!”



Reprodução

By *Luciana Bento* – Communication Coordinator of Conexão Saúde at Maré

The public health doctor **Valcler Rangel Fernandes** has a long-standing relationship with the territories of Maré and Manguinhos, located in the vicinities of Fiocruz. While he was still a student, in the 1980s, he already attended these places to take part in health education programs.

Today, as the officer for Institutional Affairs at Fiocruz and a member of the Steering Committee for the project Conexão Saúde – De Olho na Covid, Valcler is ahead of pioneering experiences to face the pandemic in these territories. Such activities focus not only on public health, but are also related to the effective articulation and participation of local actors and leaders in the process.

One year and a half after the beginning of the biggest global health crisis ever experienced by humanity, many challenges have been faced. In the case of Maré, even in a difficult scenario, rapid and correct responses helped reducing the number of deaths and dealing with confirmed cases of Covid-19 in an innovative and efficient manner.

Today, the largest set of favelas in Rio de Janeiro hosts a pioneering research led by Fiocruz, in a partnership with Redes da Maré and the Municipal Health Department, to assess the effectiveness of the AstraZeneca vaccine, to monitor the coronavirus variants, to study the immunity of unvaccinated people and to understand the sequelae left by Covid-19, among other issues.

“Maré gathers a set of specificities that is not easy to find elsewhere. Not doing something related to scientific research in this unique territory would be a mistake, it would mean missing an opportunity that will hardly repeat itself,” he says.

In an exclusive interview for the bulletin *Conexão Saúde – De Olho no Corona*, doctor Fernandes talks about how the study is breaking paradigms and the importance of demystifying science and appreciating unconventional knowledge. “There are so many people who are skilled and qualified to be part of the studies! These are people who are curious about new subjects, who seek new knowledge, who get engaged, involved... It would be another mistake not to value this precious capital,” he concludes.



For starters, can you talk a little bit about this historical relationship between Fiocruz and both urban and rural peripheral territories, especially Maré and Manguinhos?

This is a relationship that dates back to the 1980s and covers not only peripheral territories in cities, such as favelas, but also indigenous populations, for example. In the case of Maré and Manguinhos, the territories are our neighbors. There is a very strong connection; things that happen there affect the daily life of Fiocruz, the lives of our employees.

An example was the tragically famous episode with police helicopters flying over Maré and shooting. This moment affected us deeply. I myself participated in the evacuation process of the Fiocruz building. It was something very heavy. So, we cannot close our eyes to this reality. Fiocruz has been involved in these issues related to the territory, discussing violence as a public health issue.

In the 1980s, Fiocruz was carrying out a health education project in Maré, assisting in the development of mechanisms for the participation of the organized society in various processes. This happened during a time when democracy was being built in the country, after the military dictatorship.

And how did this historical relationship culminate in the creation of the project Conexão Saúde - De Olho na Covid in Maré and Manguinhos?

With the pandemic, health has become an absolute protagonist, a priority public policy in these territories. So, it could not have been any different: It was a combination of experts and a historical relationship to face a very concrete and complex problem.

Fiocruz was already developing the project Se Liga no Corona!, to communicate with favelas and peripheral territories. The approach was very organic; and it continued with the creation of Conexão Saúde, which included communication as one of its strategic pillars.

The project innovated a lot, bringing concrete results and becoming the gateway to our other endeavors between partners. This presence in the territory was very important, especially because the work of the City Hall was very weak at the time. The Municipal Health Department was not responding well to the proposals presented nor pointing out solutions for very urgent problems.

And now we see how important it is for administrators to make appropriate decisions. Many things have only been possible because the City Hall has changed its stance regarding the pandemic and the territory.

“All of this in a territory where, in theory, it is more difficult to work, especially due to violence. But, even in relation to this point, the study represents a paradigm breaker. The difficulty cannot make it impossible, and we are showing that it is possible to work in a different way.”



Almost one and a half years later, other innovations occurred. From the campaign #VacinaMaré to the execution of an unprecedented study, led by Fiocruz in a partnership with the Municipal Health Department and Redes da Maré in the territory...

We had to rise up to the challenges of the pandemic at each moment. In our plans, what we thought would last for three, four months, lasted much longer. We saw the possibility of doing a research which was full of specificities that only Maré can display.

It is a favela setting with a large population density. There are 140 thousand residents in a very narrow strip between Avenida Brasil and Linha Vermelha. This brings us important results related to the fight against the pandemic, the outcomes of Conexão Saúde combined with the mass vaccination...

All of this in a territory where, in theory, it is more difficult to work, especially due to violence. But, even in relation to this point, the study represents a paradigm break. The difficulty cannot make it impossible, and we are showing that it is possible to work in a different way.

The study has an important characteristic of outreaching and involving people from the territory in the process. Can you talk a little bit about this?

It is, in fact, a research that prioritizes interaction with the population, the involvement of actors within the territory, the role of Community Health Agents, family clinics, local organizations and the residents per se.

It is a way to show the importance of science in everyday life, to bring this discussion closer people, since it is usually something very distant. Research helps making this scientific dimension palpable. And people respond very well to it, they realize they can also do science somehow. It's not something for the enlightened ones.

Could our study be done otherwise? Yes. There are several ways to perform a research: from secondary or observation data, for example. But we made this choice to include those who actually lived in the favela as part of the process.



It is certainly a riskier, more complex road. How to research with engagement? How to promote this approach? Behind this choice is the belief that research must not be important only for the researcher, for the research group, for the institution, for the university.

It has to be fundamentally important for the population, for the residents, for the public health system. When research elements, from scientific data, are incorporated into the services, such services become qualified, improved. It is a way to return knowledge to the society.

“It is certainly a riskier, more complex road. How to research with engagement? How to promote this approach? Behind this choice is the belief that research must not be important only for the researcher, for the research group, for the institution, for the university.”

I want to emphasize a point in your speech, when you say that science must not be something only for enlightened ones... How can this access be extended during a time when scientific information and knowledge are being questioned all over the world and, especially, in Brazil?

When the Minister of Education himself says that University is not for everyone, we see that the scenario is indeed very complex. I refute this argument with another one: doing science cannot be treated as something outlandish. The search for knowledge is for everyone. We cannot be overwhelmed by this medieval thinking that has emerged in recent times.

One example is the role of Community Health Agents in the Maré study. We understand that they are key elements for the qualification of this research. They have a dynamic, living, and specific knowledge about the territory. There are questions that only they can bring. These are different types of knowledge that must be incorporated into the study. It would be another mistake not to enable this dialog, not to include them deeply into this process.





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