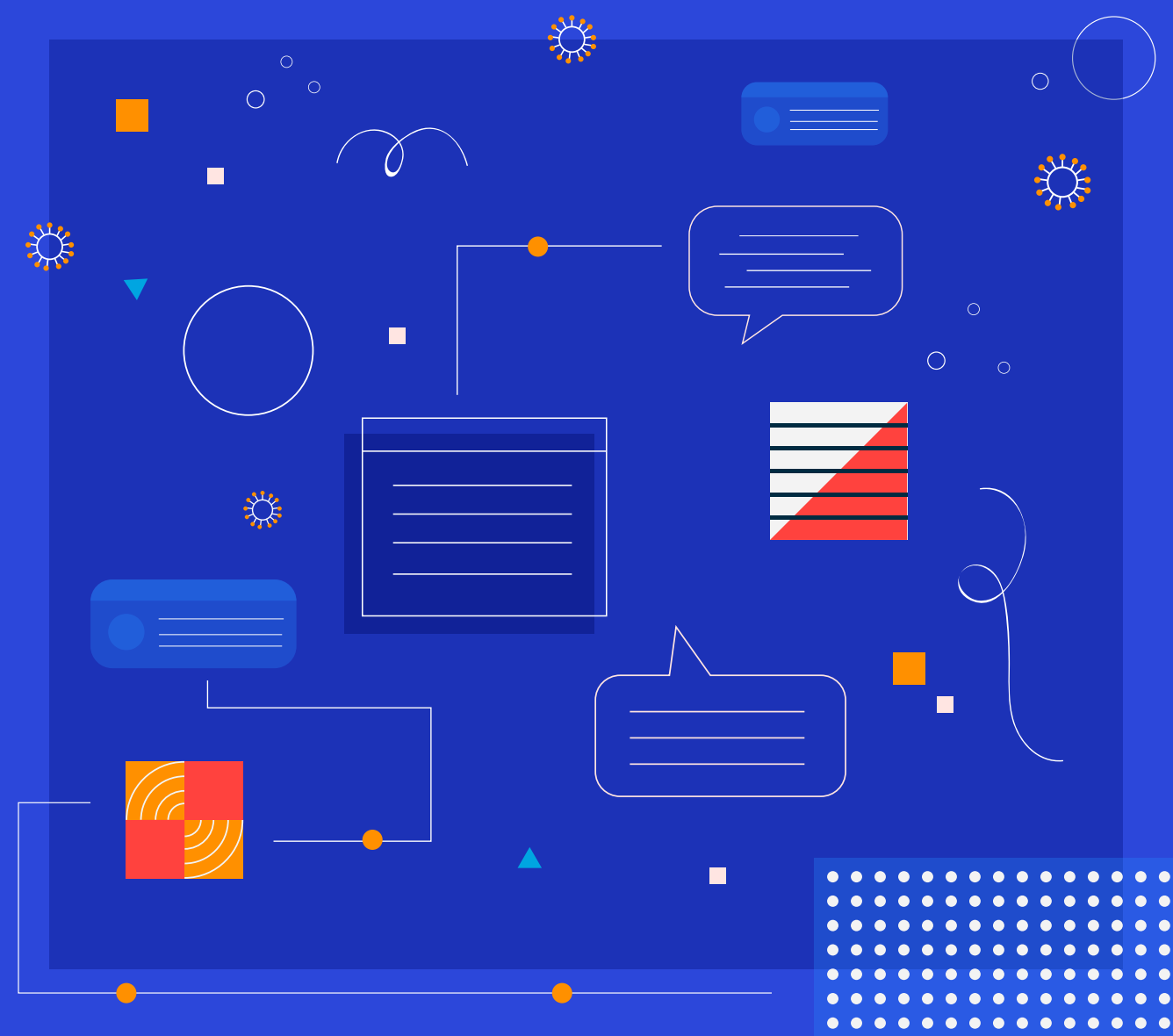




Hello

Humanitarian Rumor Bulletin

#1 | MARCH 2022



If you have questions, suggestions, or information, please contact us: **Isadora Starling** (istarling@internews.org), Project Manager, or **Samilly Valadares** (svaladaressoares@internews.org), Community Engagement and Accountability Officer.

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THE ROOTED IN TRUST

Rooted in Trust (RiT), facilitated by Internews, seeks to strengthen information ecosystems and carry out activities to listen and engage with communities in themes related to means of communication, rumor analysis, COVID-19 and vaccination. Rooted in Trust works alongside Indigenous and Quilombola communities in the states of Amapá, Pará and Roraima in an effort to respond to the 'infodemic', seeking to enhance existing communication networks to make them safer and healthier.

PARTNERS:



ABOUT THIS BULLETIN:

This bulletin aims to provide humanitarian and health partners with information about rumours identified among Indigenous communities in the states of Amapá, Pará and Roraima and Quilombola communities in the states of Pará and Amapá in the last month. Our main objective is to provide information regarding risk communication and community engagement efforts in the response to the current public health crisis. This bulletin presents two rumors mapped in Pará. The first rumor was found in Telegram groups and the second was geolocated in Belém. Below, we present the rumors' content and an analysis of their impact on the region.

MAIN SUB-THEMES RUMOR



COVID-19 SITUATION IN BRAZIL

• **29.842.418** CASES

• **658.879** DEATHS

Data on COVID-19 in Brazil show 10.239 new cases and 107 new deaths since the last record, on 27/03/2022. The mortality rate is 313,5 per 100.000 inhabitants. *According to data provided by G1, the moving average of COVID-19 cases for the last 14 days is -43% and shows a downward trend.*

INDIGENOUS

• **70192** CASES

(+2.739 since the last bulletin)

• **1295** DEATHS

Data from APIB (Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil) consider both Indigenous people who are located in traditional territories and those who are in urban contexts.

APIB data show that Roraima and Pará are among the five states with the highest number of confirmed deaths.

• **367.598** 1ST DOSE

• **344.394** 2ND DOSE AND SINGLE DOSES

The distribution of these vaccines between different regions, however, is uneven. According to the Ministry of Health, the state of Pará (in which our project operates) has the lowest percentage of vaccination among the host states of DSEI (Special Indigenous Sanitary District).

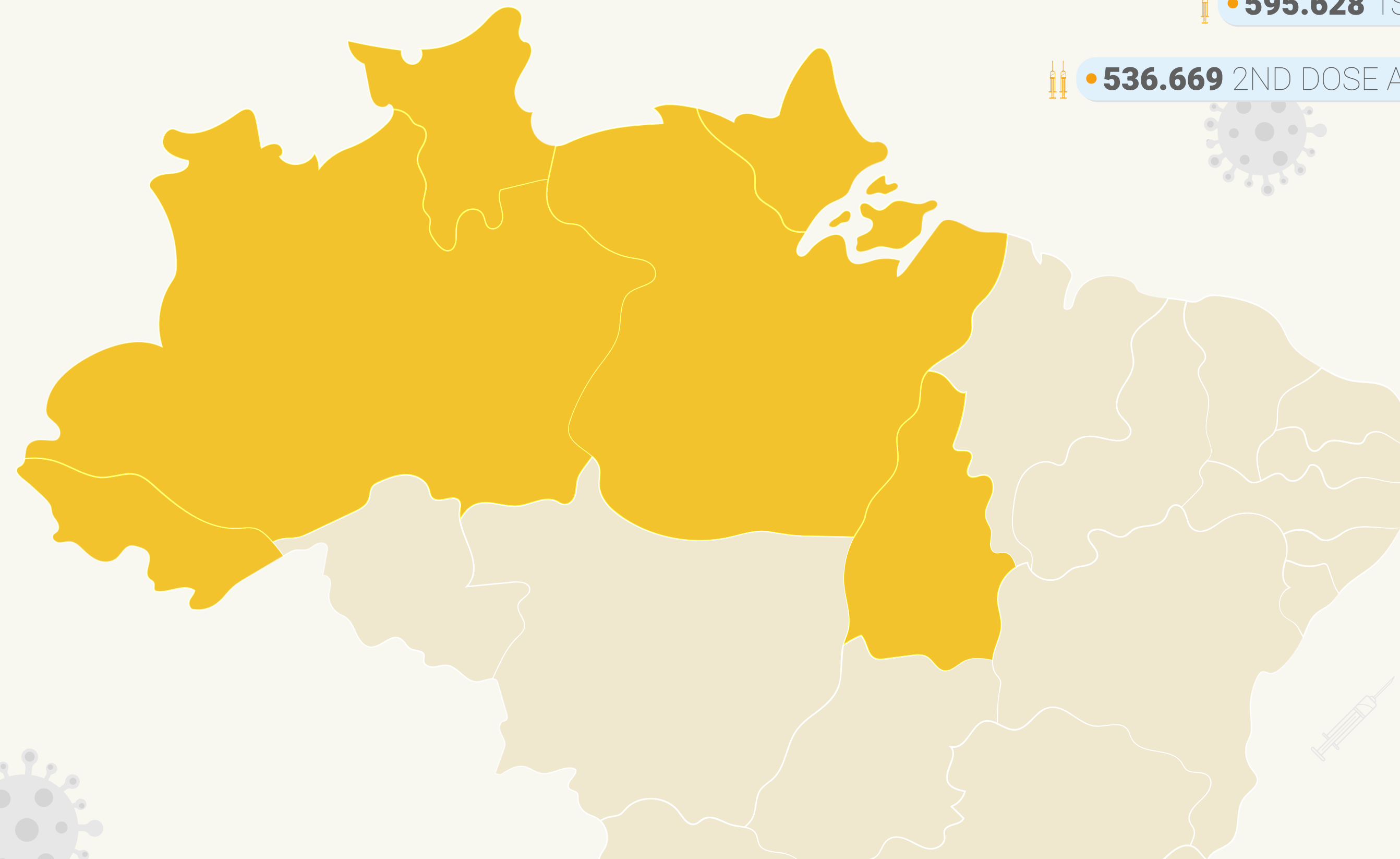
QUILOMBOLAS

• **5.666** CASES

• **301** DEATHS

• **595.628** 1ST DOSE

• **536.669** 2ND DOSE AND SINGLE DOSES



SOURCES:

Health Ministry (27/03/22) | APIB (28/03/22) | Conaq (12/01/22)

RUMOR#1

EFFICACY OF THE VACCINE



#pfizerdocuments shows that out of 39.000 test subjects, 1.223 died after receiving the vaccine due to "adverse events" directly related to the vaccine, a 3% chance of dying from the #vaccine, and a much, much higher chance of #vaccineinjuries. <https://phmpt.org/pfizers-documents/> The fact checkers, PAID BY PFIZER, will start the propaganda to say that this is not quite like that.



THE RUMOR WAS IDENTIFIED IN TELEGRAM GROUPS IN THE STATE OF PARÁ AND ORIGINATES FROM A SEQUENCE OF TWEETS THAT WAS DENIED BY FACT-CHECKERS AND BY THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY ITSELF.



FACT CHECK

In Brazil, until the beginning of February, only 0,05% of immunized people reported having any side effects, the vast majority of which were mild. During the first year of application of vaccines against COVID-19 in the country, 20 cases of serious adverse effects were recorded, after the first dose of the vaccine, and only in 14 of them a relationship with the vaccine was confirmed. In these rare cases, the vaccine can trigger thrombosis or anaphylactic shock, but it remains an extremely safe option.

SOURCES:

O GLOBO: For every 10,000 people vaccinated against Covid-19 in Brazil, only 5 have reactions, most of them mild

BBC: COVID vaccines complete one year with billion doses administered and rare serious effects

ESTADÃO: It is not true that Pfizer and the FDA have "covered up" side effects of the vaccine

NEXO: How suspected vaccine reactions and deaths are investigated



BEHIND THE RUMOR

The idea that fact-checkers receive obscure international funding renews a pattern of online attacks identified **as early as 2018**.

At the time, right-wing and far-right organizations began to spread that verifiers would "censor right-wing content", and platforms such as Facebook would put "leftists to decide what 'fake news' is".

During the pandemic, there was an update on this rumor by other actors, inferring that Pfizer funds programs that train journalists in fact-checking for Facebook, evoking proximity between the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and the platform.

WHY IT MATTERS / IMPACT ANALYSIS

Using strategies similar to major document leaks, the rumor speaks to both vaccine conspiracy theories and those involving fact-checkers and international organizations.

In dialogue with rumors that *circulated previously*, this type of association can generate resistance and distrust towards organizations that promote vaccination or that investigate misinformation about vaccines.

This distrust can also extend to other niches beyond healthcare. General information provided by journalists, data-checking agencies, the media or other agents may lose credibility in the face of some population groups. This can pose a general threat to the access of these same people to verifiable and timely information, also increasing certain social and political risks.

The dissemination of misinformation about adverse effects of the vaccine against COVID-19 can trigger more distrust of certain population groups regarding the efficacy and safety of other vaccines, which could undermine other immunization agendas.

In the long term, this type of distrust towards public health agents and international and civil society organizations responsible for health actions can lead to low adherence or withdrawal from services related to health issues commonly associated with ideological agendas (mental health, sexual and reproductive rights, child health, family and community medicine).

From this same perspective, minority groups can become especially vulnerable due to difficulty in accessing these services. Public policies aimed at these groups can also suffer damage to their credibility. Traditional populations can be especially affected in such a scenario.



MOBILIZATION & POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

In addition to rumor analysis, Internews considers it relevant to reflect on possible actions in response to "infodemic". Here we suggest some possible responses, such as:

01. Through community approaches already adopted by humanitarian actors and civil society, it is worthwhile to strengthen or create listening spaces with communities of interest, aimed at sharing doubts and perceptions about the effects of the vaccine against COVID-19 and other recurring fears in the post-pandemic context;

02. This type of listening makes it possible to identify the population's main doubts regarding this issue, as well as the best ways of answering them together alongside the communities;

03. It is important to remember that promoting vaccination actions and campaigns, for COVID-19 and in general, must respect and encompass the relationship with traditional medicines, showing points of convergence between the two universes;

04. Beyond topics of vaccination against COVID-19 and immunization in general, it can be worth it to create or strengthen listening spaces aimed at other identified health issues that affect the population and generate interest, but which may be causing some kind of distrust;

05. Humanitarian and civil society organizations can reinforce their roles, origins and mandates by strengthening feedback channels with the population in a neutral and impartial way, and reinforcing the importance of community decisions in the centrality of its actions.

RUMOR#2

TREATMENT AND HEALING



"In my CT scan, 75% of my lung was infected by covid. I stayed at home, took azithromycin and ivermectin, vitamin D, and an anticoagulant. I kept a healthy diet. My parents 72, and 73 years old too, my daughters also same medication. Who is the real NEGATIONIST?"



THE RUMOR WAS IDENTIFIED
ON BETHLEHEM'S TWITTER



FACT CHECK

Only six drugs were formally approved by Anvisa for the treatment of COVID-19, on an emergency basis: Remdesivir, Casirivimab and imdevimab, Regkirona (regdanvimab), Sotrovimab, Baricitinib and Evusheld®(cilgavimab + tixagevimab).

However, according to reporting by UOL, they have a high cost, are not available through public healthcare and private healthcare networks rarely use them.

SOURCES:

US FOOD & DRUG: Why you should not use Ivermectin to treat or prevent COVID-19

FORBES: Ivermectin does not help patients with Covid, study shows

O GLOBO: Largest study on ivermectin shows that the drug is not effective in reducing Covid-19 hospitalizations - Los Angeles Times



BEHIND THE RUMOR

The use of chloroquine and ivermectin, drugs that make up the so-called "covid kit" against COVID-19, is still widely defended, despite the substances not having proven efficacy and offering risks to the population.

An analysis of the rumors we collected shows that words such as "chloroquine", "ivermectin", "defend", "vaccine" and "experiment" form a group of terms used together frequently.

Authorities such as the Pharmacy Council and ANVISA show concern about the increase in the commercialization of azithromycin, used for the treatment of bacterial infections and with no proven effectiveness against the virus that causes COVID-19. Across Brazil, there was a 103% increase in sales of the drug between November 2020 and January 2021 when compared to the previous year. Now, at the beginning of 2022, a new increase has already been observed: 50%.

TECHNICAL NOTE - AZITROMICINA - COVID-19

WHY IT MATTERS / IMPACT ANALYSIS

The Federal Pharmacy Council (CFF) has monitored, together with the consultancy IQVIA, the marketing of drugs without proven efficacy against COVID-19. Sales of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine in Brazil fell (-61% and -42%, respectively) between November 2021 and January 2022 compared to the same period of the previous year, when there was an explosion in sales (921% and 135%, respectively).

However, the use of these two drugs is far from pre-pandemic levels, indicating that they continue to be used to treat COVID-19 even without being effective to do so. The case of Roraima is particularly noteworthy, where the reduction in hydroxychloroquine sales (-6%) was timid compared to the Brazilian average and where the explosion of ivermectin sales at the height of the pandemic (November/2020 to January/2021) was impressive (2069%).

In the northern region, especially in the state of *Roraima*, there is a high incidence of malaria cases among Indigenous populations. There are reports of shipments of high amounts of chloroquine to the Yanomami region during increases of COVID-19 cases, but also of low stocks of the drug during peaks in malaria. Those who already used chloroquine can be even more susceptible to using it for COVID-19 treatment.

The rumor mentions different age groups as if they were immune to the risks of using chloroquine, ivermectin and other substances. This type of idea can encourage self-medication by different groups of the population, which triggers different health risks.



SOURCES:

Amazônia Real - Bolsonaro government floods indigenous villages with chloroquine | Amazônia Real - Mission with Minister of Defense takes 66,000 chloroquine tablets to the indigenous people of Roraima

MOBILIZATION & POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

In addition to rumor analysis, Internews considers it relevant to reflect on possible actions in response to "infodemic". Here we suggest some possible responses, such as:

01. Through community approaches already adopted by local organizations and humanitarian agencies in their activities, it is worth it to strengthen and/or create spaces for listening, to understand why these medicines still have so much strength. It is crucial, in these spaces, to obtain information about people's perceptions, doubts and feelings regarding the safety and efficacy of these substances.

02. Beyond fact-checking and rumor analysis, an alternative to strengthen this approach is to create safe, neutral and impartial dialogue and feedback spaces among groups that represent the community, humanitarian agents and health authorities.

03. Once these spaces and dialogue channels are well-established, it is also possible to engage the community in the production and distribution of content that educates people on the risks of the mentioned medication.

04. These same spaces can be aimed at promoting and sharing self-care practices and traditional knowledge, to encourage care habits and well-being in the community and discourage risky behaviors, such as self-medication.