

## **Díaz-Canel stands out for its intense scientific activity in Cuba**

August 26, 2020 (Cuba)

The general director of the Finlay Institute of Vaccines, Vicente Vérez Bencomo, stated this Wednesday in the Palace of the Revolution that phase one of Soberana's clinical trial, the first Cuban vaccine candidate against COVID-19, is going well and so far only slight and common adverse effects have been observed, such as headache and in the area of the arm where the injection is placed.

In the weekly meeting that the President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, and the Prime Minister, Manuel Marrero Cruz, hold with the scientists and experts directly involved in the fight against the epidemic, the project leader recalled that the study started last August 24th and should be continued next week with other 20 volunteers over 60 years old.

Vérez Bencomo informed that there is a rapid progress in a second candidate, "we are finishing the formulation this week and filling it next week, it is a different vaccine, it has the same antigen of Soberana, but it is another platform: the conjugated vaccines that we have". It is giving very interesting answers in animals as well, the researcher affirmed, very close to the ones that the first vaccine has. "And we are going to move it quickly to try to be starting clinical trials in October," he affirmed.

**At this meeting, the results of a clinical trial with the use of ozonotherapy by rectal route in patients confirmed with SARS-CoV-2, who had mild and moderate symptoms, were also presented. As detailed by the Doctor of Science Sarahi Mendoza Castaño, Director of Research, Development and Innovation of the National Center for Scientific Research, it was evidenced that "the association of the ozone therapy with the conventional treatment of the COVID-19 increased by 40% the number of patients with negative PCR test on the fifth day".**

**Likewise, it was possible to reduce the hospital stay by 3.5 days on average per patient. The ozone therapy, he said, was safe, well-tolerated, and there were no biosafety incidents.**

These results made it possible to incorporate ozone therapy as an adjuvant treatment option in patients with persistent positive CRP, within the national protocol of action for COVID-19.

Precisely about the most recent modifications to this clinical management protocol, Dr. Ileana Morales Suárez, National Director of Science and Technological Innovation of the Ministry of Public Health, added that the application of Heberferon in the therapeutic scheme was extended, as well as the use of hyperimmune plasma in patients with positive PCR on the 14th day of its confirmation, all of this as a result of studies and interventions of Cuban doctors and scientists.

Regarding all this work that has been generated in the country after COVID-19 epidemic, the Head of State considered that "this is giving us as a sign that there is an intense scientific activity, encouraged by looking for an effective, safe and sovereign confrontation to COVID-19; and it is generating a scientific dynamic".

In this work session, Dr. Raúl Guinovart Díaz, dean of the Mathematics Faculty of the University of Havana, also presented an update of the forecast models on the epidemic's behavior in Cuba, which confirm the decrease in the amount of active cases, after reaching the peak of the new outbreak on August 15th, with 634 confirmed and hospitalized then.

That decrease, he said, is being slow, "if in five days we go up in more than 130 cases, in 11 we have only gone down a hundred".

By the end of October, he said, the number of active cases is predicted to be over 50, still high for what the country has been doing. The situation in Cuba is under control in comparison with the world, he considered, although in the concepts we have developed that figure still seems high to us.

Guinovart Díaz warned that, in August, 75% of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Cuba are between 20 and 59 years old.

These models, said President Díaz-Canel, continue to show us the need of young people's responsible behavior, because they are the ones who have more incidence now and those who can cause the infection, especially when they are asymptomatic, in old people, who later become serious and critical.

We must continue to increase the efficiency of the measures, he said, to get out of the resurgence in the shortest time possible. Although this did not reach the magnitude of the initial one, in time it is being prolonged almost equally. Today's figure - with 506 active patients - puts us below even the most favorable scenario. If we keep this up, we can achieve it.

Díaz-Canel referred to the new measures being analyzed to increase the restriction of mobility in Havana, which will be explained in the next few hours, "to see if in a fortnight we will be able to exhaust, as much as possible, the move away from scenarios that give 100 or 50 active cases until October.

Following the path traced by science, the President also checked this Wednesday the situation of COVID-19 in the national territory which accumulates 3 759 diagnosed patients so far and, particularly, he reviewed the situation in Havana, Artemisa, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos and Sancti Spiritus provinces.

The most complicated epidemiological context continues to be concentrated in the capital, which in the last day counted 442 confirmed and admitted patients, although 362 were properly from the capital.

The provinces of Artemisa and Villa Clara, although they maintain confirmed cases and local transmission events, there is a trend towards infection control in both territories.

According to the Minister of Public Health, José Angel Portal Miranda, five events of local transmission of the disease are active in Havana, after concluding those that had been generated in Balcón Arimao and Arroyo Arenas, from La Lisa municipality; and opening a new one in the Popular Mantilla Council, in Arroyo Naranjo.

Regarding the latter, the Minister pointed out that the index case corresponds to a person who held two parties, an indiscipline that has so far caused 13 positive cases. This includes a population of 650 Havana residents who are under a quarantine regime.

It was also learned that the provinces of Artemisa and Villa Clara, even though they maintain confirmed cases and events of local transmission, there is a tendency to control contagion in both territories. Meanwhile, Cienfuegos with 119 days without reporting sick people and Sancti Spíritus with 109 days in the same condition, continue without setbacks the transit through the third phase of the epidemic recovery.

At the same time, work has been undertaken in these provinces to reestablish in the shortest time possible the effects of Tropical Storm Laura. Services such as electricity and water are resuming their normal rates, while the damage to homes is still being assessed to certify the final number. This way it was confirmed to the maximum direction of the Government that from this Wednesday it began to check the recovery in the same daily video conference on the situation of the COVID-19: two problems with the same urgency.

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