

**COVID-19 in Cuba: the interplay of government and societal actions with statistics**

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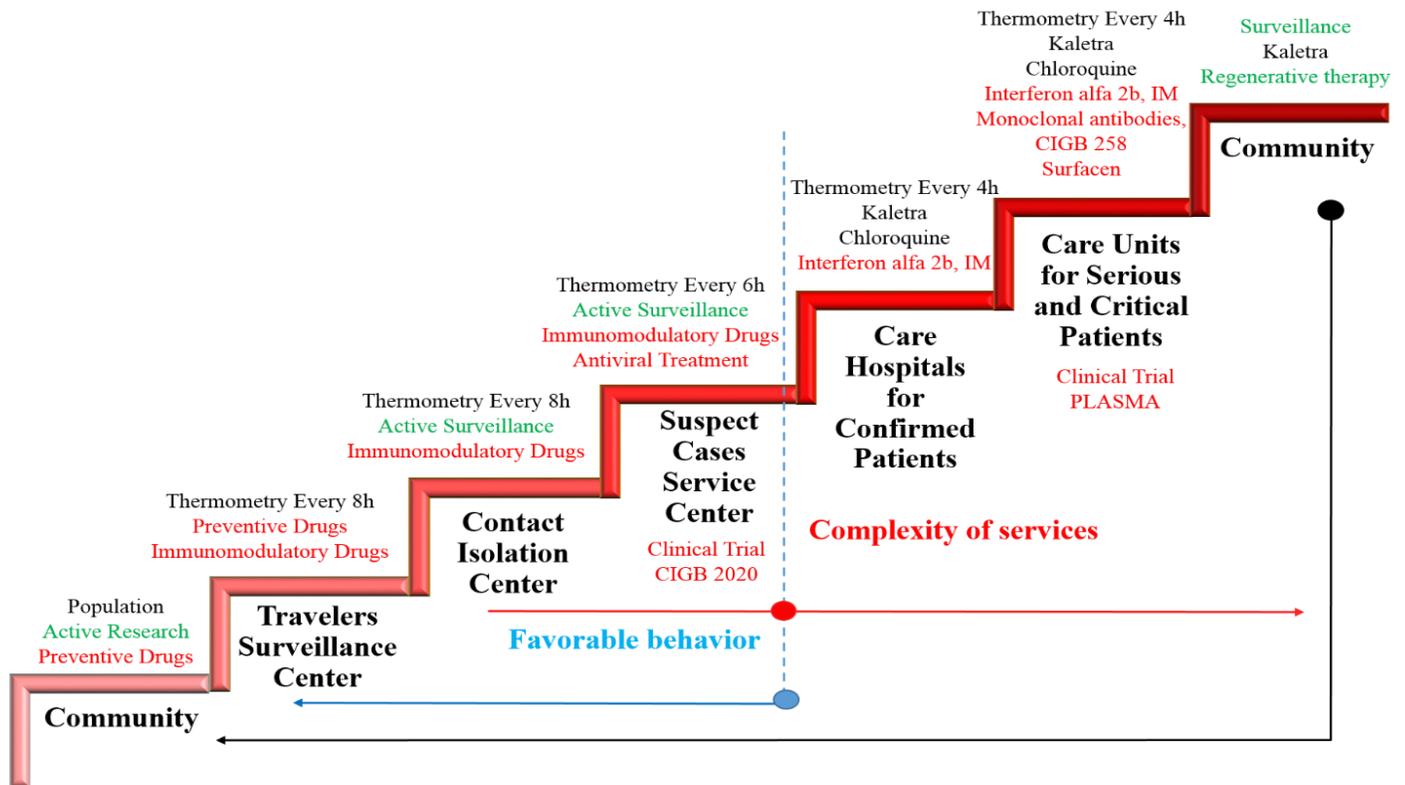
Cuba's government has evolved different approaches over time to fight different outbreaks of SARS-Cov-2. These approaches use Intersectoral leadership, centralized coordination, epidemiological surveillance and control, public information and engagement, active screening of risk groups, clinical protocols and research, adaptation of hospitals and other health facilities and International cooperation (*MEDICC Review* 7(5), 2005). In January 2020, the first positive cases of SARS-Cov-2 in America were confirmed, and the Cuban National Strategic Plan for confronting SARS-Cov-2 was designed on 12 February. This was to be managed by the National Technical Group in the Health Ministry, involving all organizations of the Central State Administration, companies, the non-state sector and the general population. On 11 March, the WHO declared the disease a pandemic and the Cuban Government confirmed the introduction of COVID-19 with the diagnosis of the first three positive cases of SARS-Cov-2, from three Italian tourists who were immediately hospitalized, and their close contacts were also isolated and evaluated.

At this point, taking into account previous experience and the Cuban Biopharmaceutical Industry development, the Cuban care protocol was stratified in a preventive setting (Favourable behaviour) and one of care for patients in their different stages (Complexity of services) (Figure 1).

On 25 March, different *ad hoc* multidisciplinary research groups were created in the National Technical Group to confront the disease. These were made up of mathematicians, computer science specialists, epidemiologists, physicists, biologists, geographers, demographers, meteorologists, computer scientists, bioinformatics, specialists in aging, clinicians, immunologists and virologists, from all the Universities are working on mathematical and computational modelling of the epidemic, the evaluation of interventions, the social response and the effectiveness of government measures, to make science results available to decision-makers in real time and win the battle against SARS-Cov-2 in the shortest possible time.

**Figure 1: Cuban protocol stratification during COVID-19 outbreak, provided by Ileana Morales, from Ministry of Public Health of Cuba**

**Section D: Global Issues: COVID-19 in Cuba and the USA: policy and statistics**



The national group is headed by the University of Havana. This group meets regularly with the top level of government to provide interactive, science-based management of the epidemic. They also make regular appearances on prime-time national TV to explain important concepts to the population

Following the above, as at 5 May 5 2020, there have been 1685 positive cases in Cuba, of whom 954 have recovered and 69 have died. Despite the fact that the infection has not been completely eliminated in Cuba, there has been a considerable decrease in the number of positive cases, from a maximum of 78 positive cases on one day, a result considerably lower than reported by other countries. Daily information on the disease’s progress is provided by the Ministry of Public Health in a press conference and reflected immediately in the site COVID-19 Dashboard Cuba, a joint effort of the Ministry of Public Health and the national modelling group.

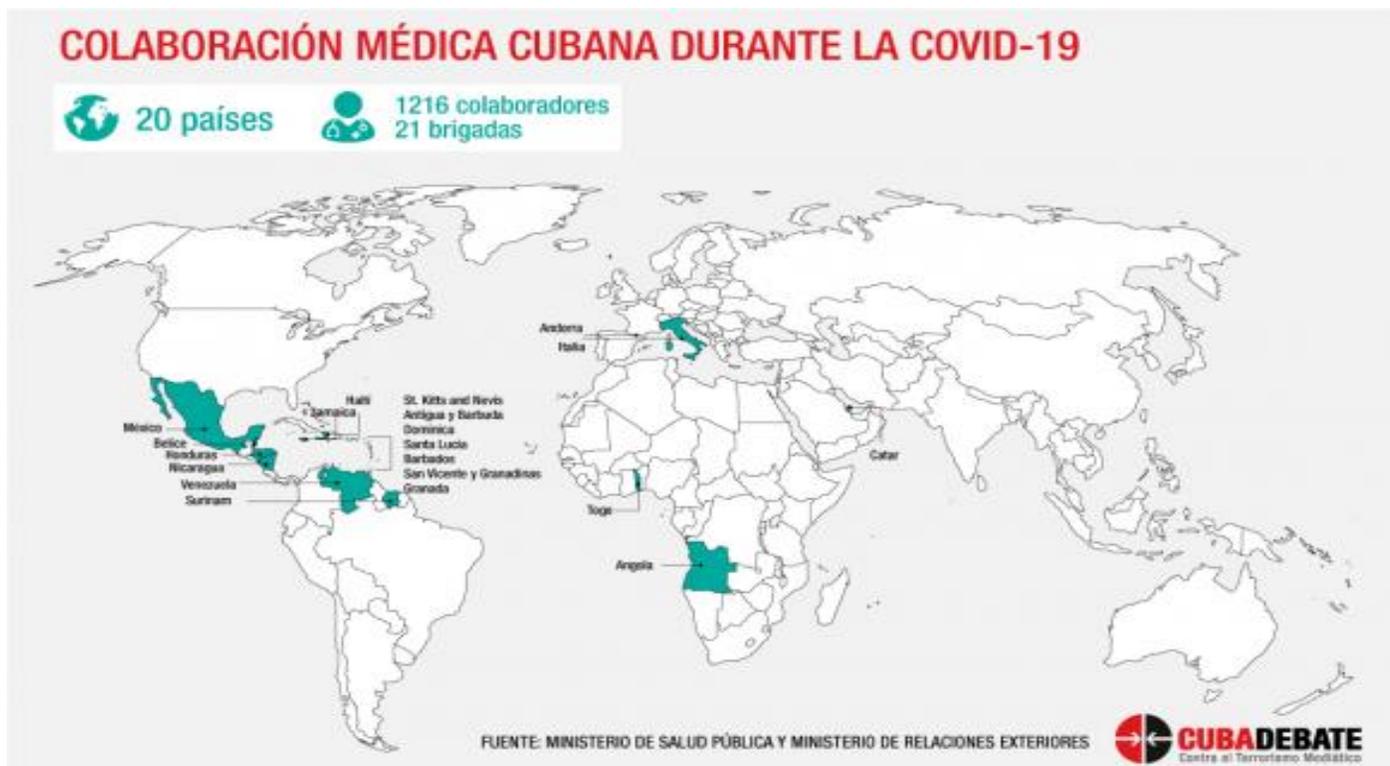
However, due to the current relationship with the United States, things have become more difficult for Cuba. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the Trump administration is blocking purchases by and deliveries to Cuba of medicines, ventilators, and other health supplies. On 13 April, the director of international relations at the Cuban Ministry of Health denounced a U.S. imposed blockade on Cuban purchases of medical supplies. This took place after U.S. Corporation Vyaire Medical acquired two companies that have regularly

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supplied the Cuban health system: Swiss manufacturer IMT Medical and ventilator company Autronic. After the acquisition, both companies told Cuba they would no longer provide supplies. This is part of the economic blockade imposed by the USA since 1962, which includes sanctions against companies that do business with Cuba. Since then, and since the fall of the “Soviet bloc”, basic intermediate goods not produced on the island, or those that cannot be produced in sufficient quantities, must often be paid for in advance at inflated prices—conditions imposed by companies seeking to protect themselves from potential US sanctions. In addition, many products must be purchased from distant countries, leading to much higher transportation costs.

US weaponises coronavirus to attack Cuba. They have stopped already-paid for equipment from being supplied. Trumpist murderous imperialism is disgusting. Humanitarian deterrence of the virus, not Cold War-era regime change, should be the top priority of US foreign policy.

**Figure 2: Cuban medical collaboration due to COVID-19 pandemic from Ministry of Public Health of Cuba, 20 April 2020.**



On 25 March, as a team of Cuban doctors and medical technicians set up field hospitals in the Lombardy region of Northern Italy to treat thousands of Italians infected with COVID-19, the US State Department issued an absurd warning, via Twitter, against accepting Cuban humanitarian support. “Host countries seeking Cuba’s help for #COVID-19 should scrutinize agreements and end labor abuses”, the message stated “#Cuba offers its international medical missions to those afflicted with #COVID-19 only to make up the money

it lost when countries stopped participating in the abusive program”. This is a reference to right-wing governments, such as those in Brazil and Bolivia, which in 2019 were pressurised by the USA to kick out thousands of Cuban doctors providing medical services. This decision has now come back to haunt the populations of those countries as COVID-19 spreads. There are now 1466 Cuban health professionals, integrated into 23 "Henry Reeve" medical brigades, serving in 22 nations throughout Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East, helping affected territories confront the virus – a battle which we know will be won only with cooperation and solidarity.

<http://www.cubadebate.cu/especiales/2020/04/20/cuba-en-datos-a-40-dias-de-la-COVID-19-en-cuba/>