

# CONFERENCIA DE KENNETH ROCHEL DE CAMARGO

## DISPUTED EXPERTISE AND CHAOTIC DISINFORMATION: COVID19 AND DENIALIST PHYSICIANS IN BRAZIL

### SOBRE ESTA CONFERENCIA

In this presentation I will show how incorrect ideas about COVID-19 were promoted by physicians in Brazil, contributing to a catastrophic response at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives and examine the implications of this episode for the social studies of science, technology and medicine. The literature on the relationship between science and society takes two broad approaches, which are sometimes at odds with each other: (i) there is a traditional critique of science that points to unsupported claims of certainty and thus undue interference in general human affairs; (ii) there are many examples of attempts to undermine reasonable scientific claims, when they clash with economic and/or political interests of certain groups. Navigating those extremes is particularly critical in situations in which accurate knowledge is necessary for intervening in people's lives, as is the case in health-related issues. Determining who has actual epistemic expertise is a key factor in solving this conundrum. An instructive example of such developments was the chaotic response to the pandemic challenge in Brazil, which saw, among other unfortunate situations, physicians aligned with the denialist federal government advocating for unproven – or proven as ineffective – treatments and disseminating unfounded doubts about vaccines. Presumed expertise on the basis of professional training clearly did not translate into actual expertise in the necessary domains to ascertain the validity of such claims and scientific advice was overridden by ideology.



**KENNETH ROCHEL  
DE CAMARGO**

Kenneth Rochel de Camargo is full professor at the Instituto de Medicina Social at the UERJ, one of the leading institutions in graduate teaching and research in public health in Brazil. He was Associate Editor of the American Journal of Public Health, 2007–2023; Editor Emeritus of the American Journal of Public Health since 2023; Vice-President of Abrasco (Brazilian Public Health Association) 2010–2012; Secretary-general of ABIA, the second oldest Brazilian HIV/aids NGO, 2009–2017; Honorary Vice-President for Latin America and The Caribbean, American Public Health Association, 2014–2015; Director of Research, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2016–2019; Member of the COVID-19 Research Roadmap Social Science Working Group/World Health Organization since 2020.

The key focus of his research is on the production, diffusion and utilization of biomedical knowledge, applying the theoretical and methodological tools of science studies. The main themes of his research have dealt with HIV/AIDS, sexuality, health care, medicalization and the spread of health misinformation on the internet.



**JUEVES  
30 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2023**



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**12.00 H (GMT+2)**



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