

## Lombardy: having served much, obliges to continue serving

*Lombardía, haber servido mucho obliga a continuar sirviendo*

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Mr. Director:

I am writing to you from the isolation in the old continent, close to the return to the homeland, to share the collective experience acquired, having had the very high honor of being a member of the first Cuban medical team belonging to Henry Reeve International Contingent, who worked in Italy dealing with the COVID-19, in response to the request made by that country to ours, in view of the situation they were facing during the month of March, which had become into the epicenter of the world pandemic.

My name, Norge Jesús Martínez Ramírez, first degree specialist in Internal Medicine, trained as a doctor of medicine and as a specialist at Pinar del Rio University of Medical Sciences.

When we arrived in the city of Crema, Lombardy, we felt the sense of being in a haunted place, since the drastic measures of social isolation the local government took to maintain all the families confined to their homes. We were immediately placed in the hospital where we joined the work: some of us in the *Pronto Socorro*, the main hospital of Crema, while others were assigned to the field hospital located in the parking lot of the same center, where we worked together with the Italian health personnel, achieving with the effort of all, the control and reduction to a minimum of cases in the city.

In our professional performance we always show our mastery of the management of the disease in total adherence to the protocols approved by the WHO, and working in line with the measures established by the Italian Medical Association, complying with our precepts in the application of the clinical-epidemiological method by which we have been trained, as well as in the care and strict use of the means of protection and compliance with the biosecurity measures that we had already experienced in other epidemiological events such as Ebola in Sierra Leone, Africa.

As always, a new challenge for all of us was to adapt to and respect their rules and procedures, which we have learned from taking them with responsibility, dedication and devotion, which ultimately led us to the satisfactory outcome of our work performance, enriched as professionals for future contingencies.

It was a challenge for all of us to carry out the technique of diagnostic means to take the samples and assembly instructions of the gasometry, which we overcame with dedication and devotion, having satisfactory results because it enriched us as professionals for future emergencies.

Some of the results of the work developed by our team were that more than 5000 medical cares, and 3668 nursing procedures, in addition to 210 medical discharges from the hospital were achieved.

Once the work was completed, we received as a token of their gratitude recognitions from the people and the authorities, who saw in us the greatness of the Cuban Revolution and the result of the work of the Commander in Chief, the main promoter of the development of Cuban medicine and of its indestructible "Army of White Coats", to which I am honored to belong to, and which we will share upon our return as a testimony of what solidarity can achieve and build.

Today, days after our return to the country with the satisfaction of having achieved the commitment assumed by our country in responding to the request of a group of countries affected by this pandemic, we have been able to appreciate that the health systems are insufficient to deal with this severe epidemiological situation, and in view of the behavior that has taken place in our country, we are sure that the word of order is RESPONSIBILITY; ours: return ourselves to the battle in the place that corresponds to us, and undertake as part of the Cuban health system, together with our people, and in agreement with our duties as citizens, acting with responsibility and being an example of discipline in accordance with the sanitary measures such as: hand washing with alcoholic and chlorine solutions, use of protective masks as well as taking social distancing, measures which have allowed the control of the disease, the only effective vaccine up to the moment, all together with the integration of new advances resulting from the application of Cuban biotechnology, that have offered a total turnaround in the clinical evolution of those affected by COVID-19 in our country.

Once again, as we have learned in our humanist training as Cuban health workers, we return confident that we have achieved the task assigned, as part of our duty to Humanity. We will have a return to the homeland, satisfied and happy, and more capable of continuing to serve the people we proudly belong to, and all those people who, within the context of solidarity, desire to share our experiences for a better world that is possible, as the Apostle said: *"having served much, obliges to continue serving"*.<sup>(1)</sup>

Crema city. Lombardy, Italy. June 2, 2020.

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