

Presentation #: 2021-089

# The COVID pandemic in Peru: Political crisis and corruption.

Health Watch USA | Virtual Colloquium

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# The COVID pandemic in Peru: Political crisis and corruption.

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Faculty Associate, Watson Caring Science Institute



**Universidad  
Norbert Wiener**



South America EBHC  
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**2021**

# PRESENTER



**Prof. Dr. Patrick A. Palmieri**

Dr. Palmieri is a nurse leader, global health expert, and research methodologist with more than 20 years of work experience in academia and industry. Previously, he co-led a \$300+ million project resulting in the largest vertically integrated health care delivery system in Peru; and he led the first successful international hospital accreditation in Peruvian history.

Dr. Palmieri has held academic and research appointments at universities and institutes in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the United States. He has published more than 50 research articles in indexed journals in English and Spanish and multiple book chapters. In addition, he has served as the chair or methodologist for more than 40 doctoral projects and dissertations. Dr. Palmieri is also an associate editor for four leading journals in global health, nursing, public health, and translation science and an editorial board member for six other journals in primary care, qualitative methods, nursing science, and health policy. Through this work, he has completed more than 300 peer-reviews for journals in health sciences and management and handled more than 100 manuscripts as editor.

Dr. Palmieri is a nationally certified researcher by the Peruvian National Committee for Science, Technology, and Innovation and a registered researcher with the Colombian National System for Science, Technology, and Innovation. Resulting from his work with vulnerable populations, Dr. Palmieri has received numerous awards including two keys to cities and an honorary doctoral degree. Furthermore, he was honored to be the first Peruvian inducted into the American Academy of Nursing for significant contributions to the development of health policy and nursing research in South America. Dr. Palmieri lives in Bolivia, Peru, and the United States with his wife, an accomplished economist, and young daughter.





# FIRST INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION – 2012



- June 5, 2012 – Pacifico Salud achieved the first health care accreditation in Peruvian history.



June 5, 2012

Organization #: 97837

Accreditation Expires:

Organization: Pacifico: OncoCare  
Address: Avenida Jose Galvez Barrenechea 1044  
City, State, Zip: San Isidro, Lima, 27  
PERU

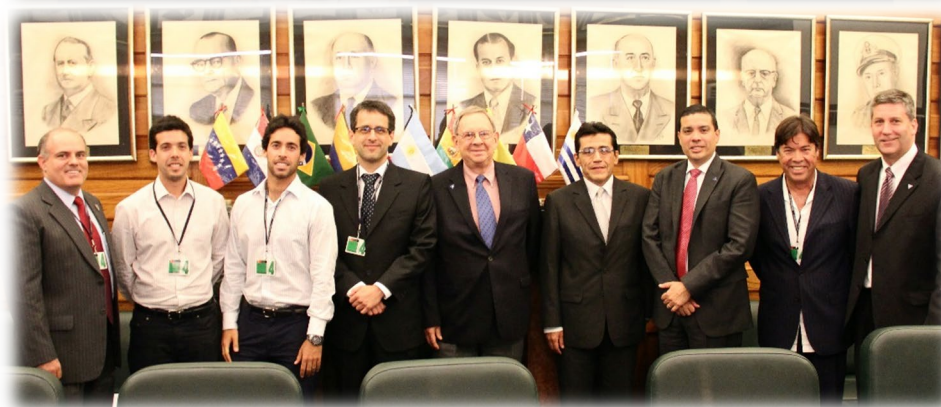
Decision Recipient: Patrick A. Palmieri, DHSc(c), EdS, MBA, MSN, ACNP, RN, CPHRM, CPHQ, FACHE

Survey Chair: Jack Egnatinsky, MD      Survey Team Member(s): John Olsen, MD, FACHE

Survey Dates: May 22-23, 2012  
Accreditation Renewal Code: 9d68173397837

It is a pleasure to inform you that the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) International Accreditation Foundation's Accreditation Committee has awarded Pacifico: OncoCare, a three-year term of accreditation.

Granting accreditation reflects confidence, based on evidence from this recent survey that you meet, and will continue to demonstrate throughout the accreditation term, the attributes of an accreditable organization as reflected in the standards found in the *Accreditation Handbook for Ambulatory Health Care*. The dedication and effort necessary for an organization to be accredited is substantial and the compliance with those standards implies a commitment to continual self-evaluation and continuous improvement.



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2021

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- The presenter has no actual or potential conflict(s) of interest in relation to the research study or this presentation.



# REGIONAL HOSPITAL COLLAPSING

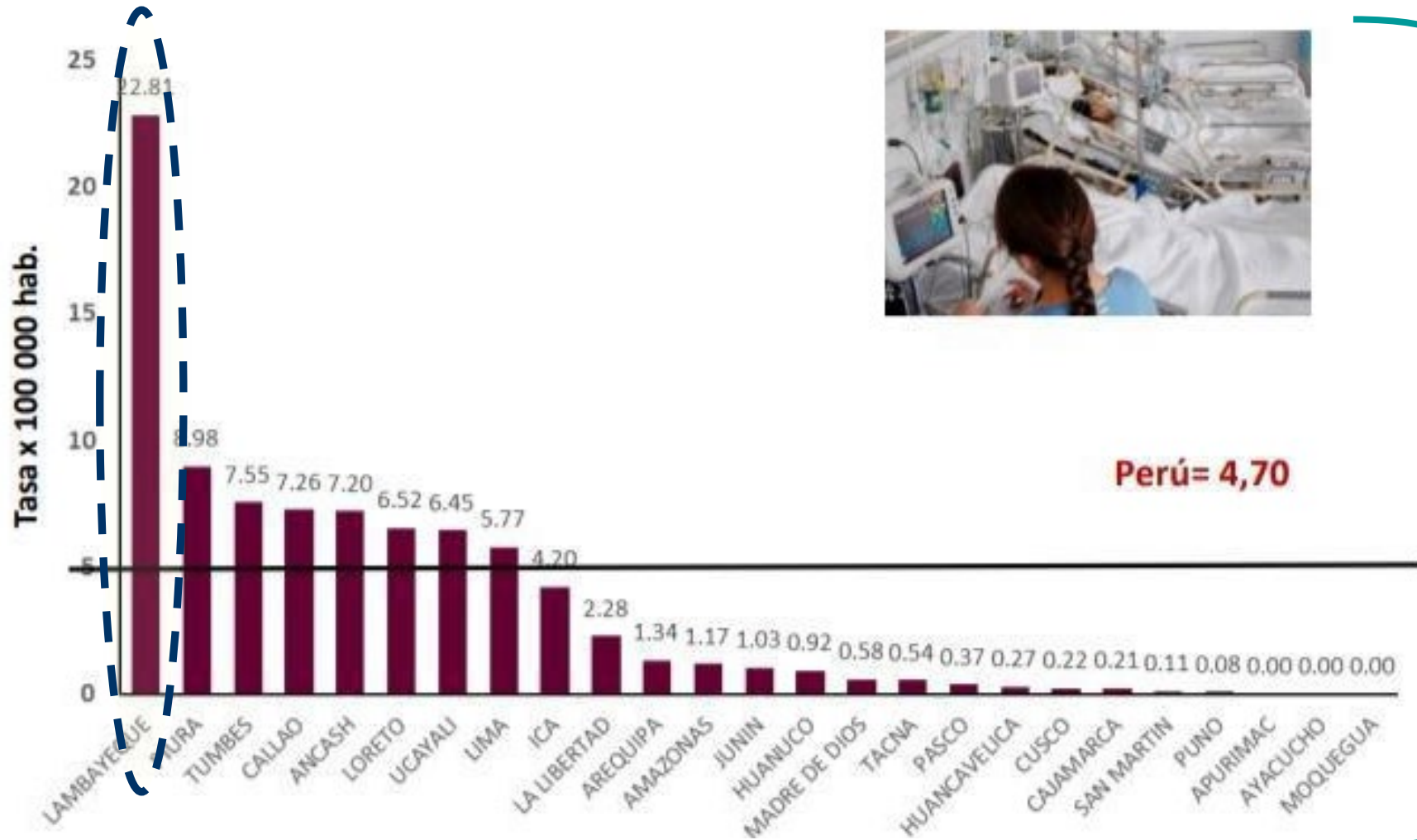


GOBIERNO REGIONAL DE  
LAMBAYEQUE

HOSPITAL REGIONAL DE LAMBAYEQUE

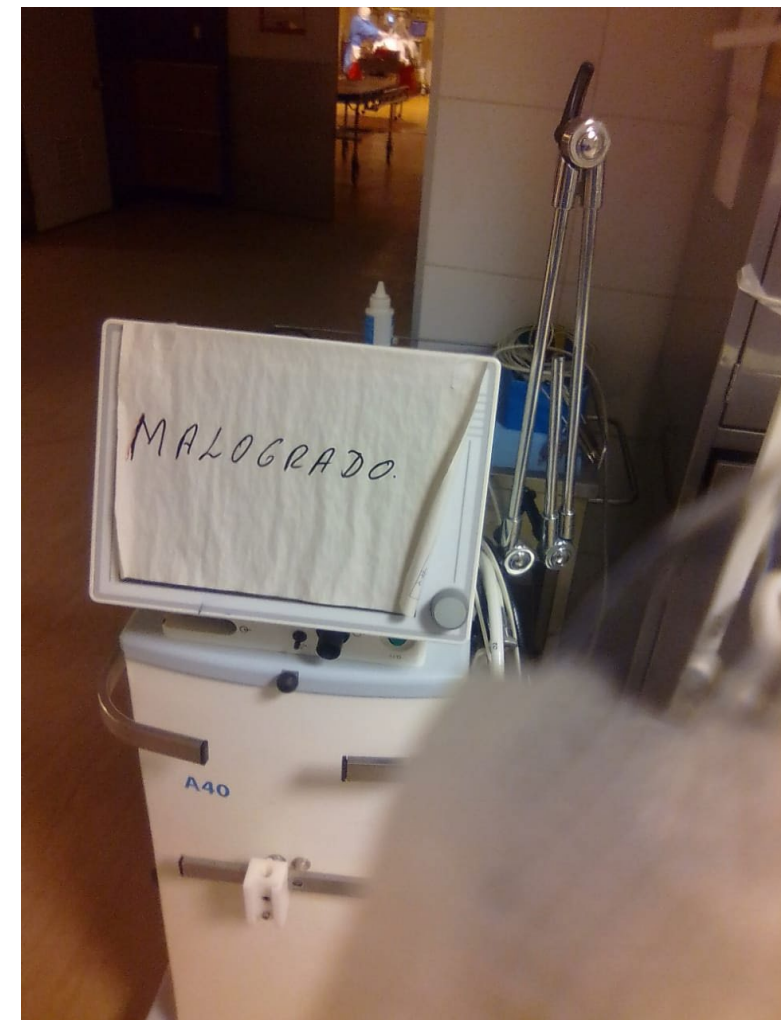
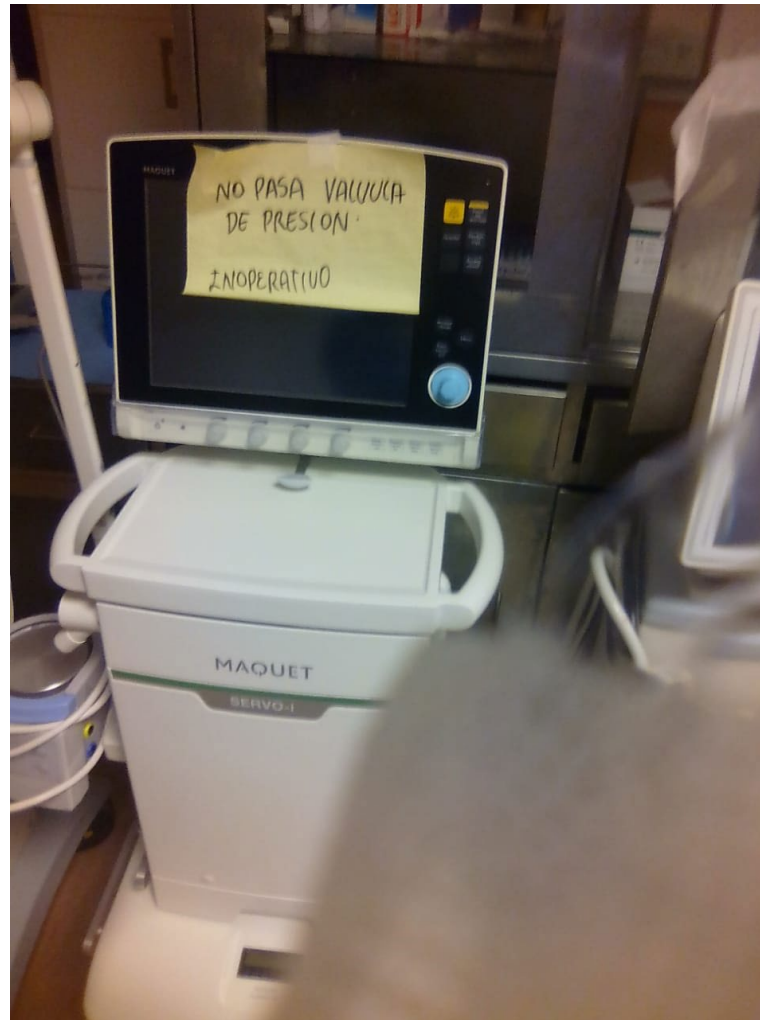


# DATA OUTLIER IN ONE REGION





# IS THE HEALTH SYSTEM COLLAPSING?





# SITUATION DIFFERENT IN PROVINCENCES?



- Patients were literally dying in every corner of the public hospitals – there were no beds, there were no medications, there were no ventilators, and there was not even no oxygen.





# HIDDEN PROBLEMS EMERGED ACROSS PERU

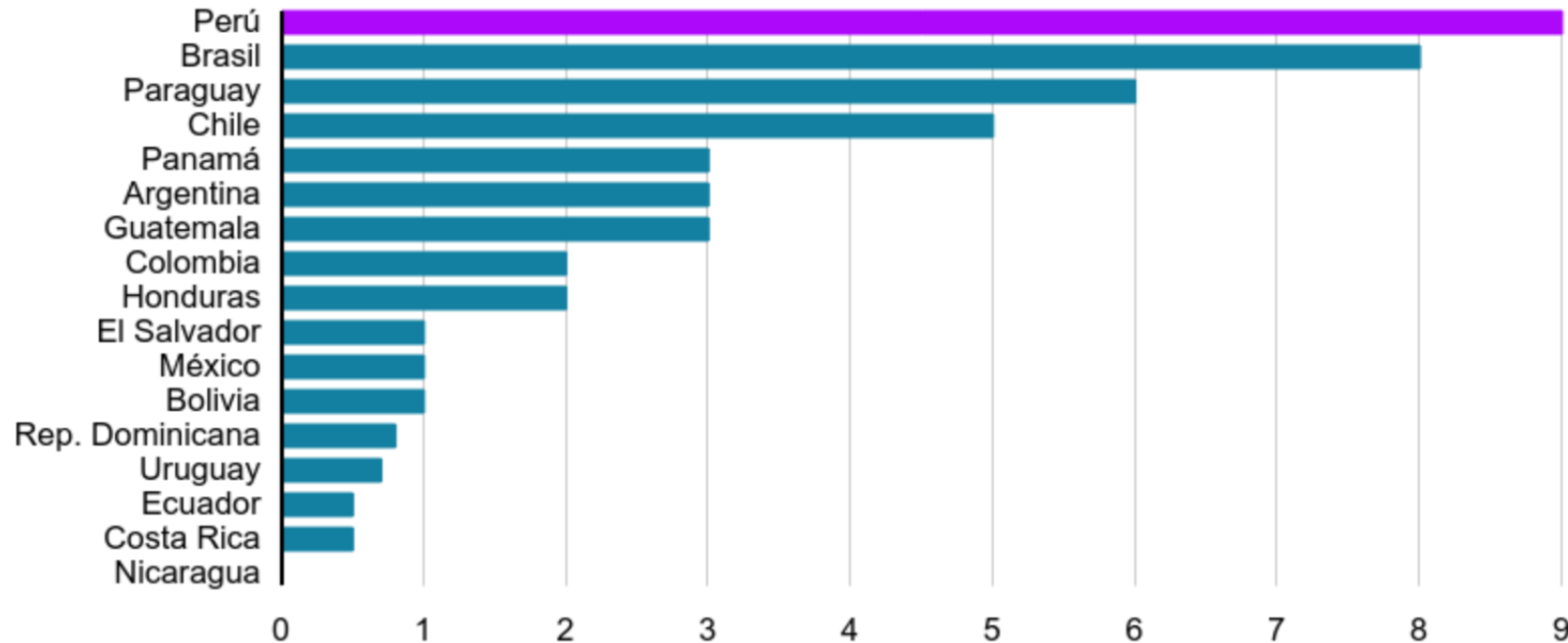
- 822 ICU and 6,337 hospital beds
- No oxygen plants resulting in US \$1,800+ for each large cylinder refill





# SPENDING FOR WHAT AND WHY?

## Gasto fiscal por covid-19 en América Latina (% del PIB)



(Datos publicados el 10 de mayo)

Fuente: Elgin, Columbia University; Basbug, Sungkyunkwan University; Yalaman, Eskişehir Osmangazi University. **BBC**

## Ambulancias incompletas, mascarillas N95 engrapadas y ventiladores mecánicos sobrevalorados en 4 regiones del país

Según el programa dominical Panorama, el Ministerio Público investiga 23 casos de presunta corrupción a nivel nacional en el sector salud.



## Minsa recibió 31 ventiladores mecánicos que no sirven para COVID-19

Máquinas fueron devueltas a su proveedor y hay otros 20 que esperan pasar revisión hoy. Gobierno compró 501 equipos que deben ser distribuidos a hospitales colapsados.

# NO VENTILATOR FOR MY WIFE IN LIMA

2020.05.28



**EC**

**MUJER MURIÓ POR FALTA DE VENTILADOR  
MECÁNICO EN HOSPITAL REBAGLIATI**



# MY FATHER IS NOT A PRIORITY IN LIMA

- Y llegó el día al que tanto terror tenía, hoy te fuiste de mi lado papito, me dejas con el corazón destrozado, **sin poderte ver todos estos días porque no me dejaban entrar, esperando por un ventilador pero no eras prioridad por ser adulto mayor**, sin poder llorar sobre tu pecho, sin poder despedirme en tus momentos de angustia y ahora sin poderte ver ni darte el último adiós, solo conformarme con cenizas que sabe Dios si serán tuyas, tenías tantas cosas por hacer, no querías morir nos decías, no hay nada sobre la faz de esta tierra que calme este dolor tan grande, solo se que ya estás con el señor, ya estás en sus brazos, él te ha recogido mi amor, mi vida, mi papito lindo 🙏🙏 Te amo infinitamente, te amo más allá de lo que te imaginas papá, espérame allá mi vida, espérame con los brazos abiertos... Jehová dió, Jehová quitó sea el nombre de Jehová bendito... 🙏💔



**University of Minnesota**

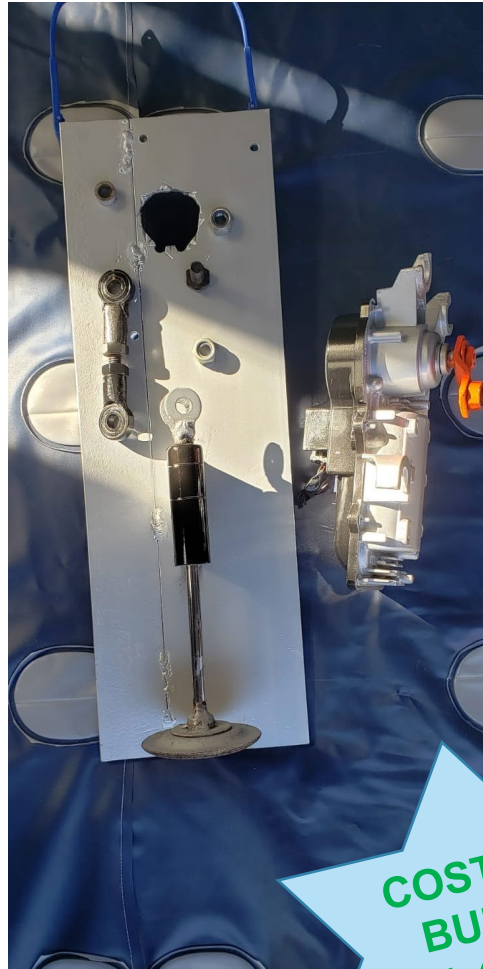
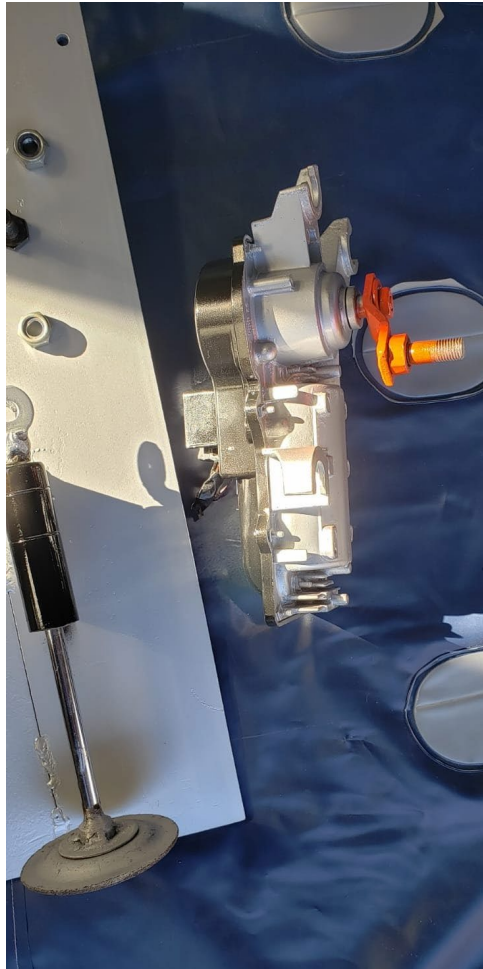
**Emergency  
Ventilator  
Project**



**FDA Approves Production Of Low Cost  
Ventilator Created By UMN Researchers**



# INEXPENSIVE VENTILATOR – NOT INTERESTED!



COST TO  
BUILD  
\$480

# DEATH DATA 'ERROR' ADMITTED

BMJ

NEWS

## Covid-19: Peru's official death toll triples to become world's highest

Owen Dyer

Peru has revised its official death toll in the covid-19 pandemic from 69 342 to 185 380, after a scientific review of medical records ordered by the government. The new figure means that Peru has had 551 covid deaths per million population, proportionally the worst official toll in the world. Hungary, which before this week had the world's highest official toll per capita, now stands a distant second at 3094 deaths per million.

More than 0.5% of Peru's people have died from covid-19, a toll worse than that recorded by the UK in the 1918-20 "Spanish" influenza pandemic.

"We think it is our duty to make public this updated information," said the Peruvian prime minister, Violeta Bermúdez, at a news conference announcing the publication of the report.<sup>1</sup>

Many covid-19 deaths were not initially classified as such, said health minister Óscar Ugarte, because of a lack of testing. But a review of cases that sought covid symptoms has brought the official figure into line with the country's actual spike in excess deaths over the past year.

Whether Peru is actually the hardest hit country is unclear, as several others show evidence of undercounting their losses, including Russia, India, Mexico, and much of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Russia's statistics agency Rosstat seemed to contradict the country's health ministry in February by reporting 162 429 covid deaths in 2020, while the ministry's figure for that year was 57 019.<sup>4</sup>

But neither of those updates changed the country's official figure. Peru's update, by contrast, is now reflected on global databases such as that maintained by Johns Hopkins University.

<sup>1</sup> Ministerio de Salud. Criterios técnicos para actualizar la cifra de fallecidos por COVID-19 en el Perú. 31 May 2021. <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minsa/informes-publicaciones/1944190-criterios-tecnicos-para-actualizar-la-cifra-de-fallecidos-por-covid-19-en-el-peru>.

<sup>2</sup> Dyer O. Covid-19: Study claims real global deaths are twice official figures. *BMJ* 2021;373:n1188. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n1188 pmid: 33972234

<sup>3</sup> Dyer O. Covid-19: Mexico acknowledges 50 000 more deaths than official figures show. *BMJ* 2020;371:nv4182. doi: 10.1136/bmj.nv4182 pmid: 33122250

<sup>4</sup> Dyer O. Covid-19: Russia's statistics agency reports much higher death toll than country's health ministry. *BMJ* 2021;372:nv440. doi: 10.1136/bmj.nv440 pmid: 33579671

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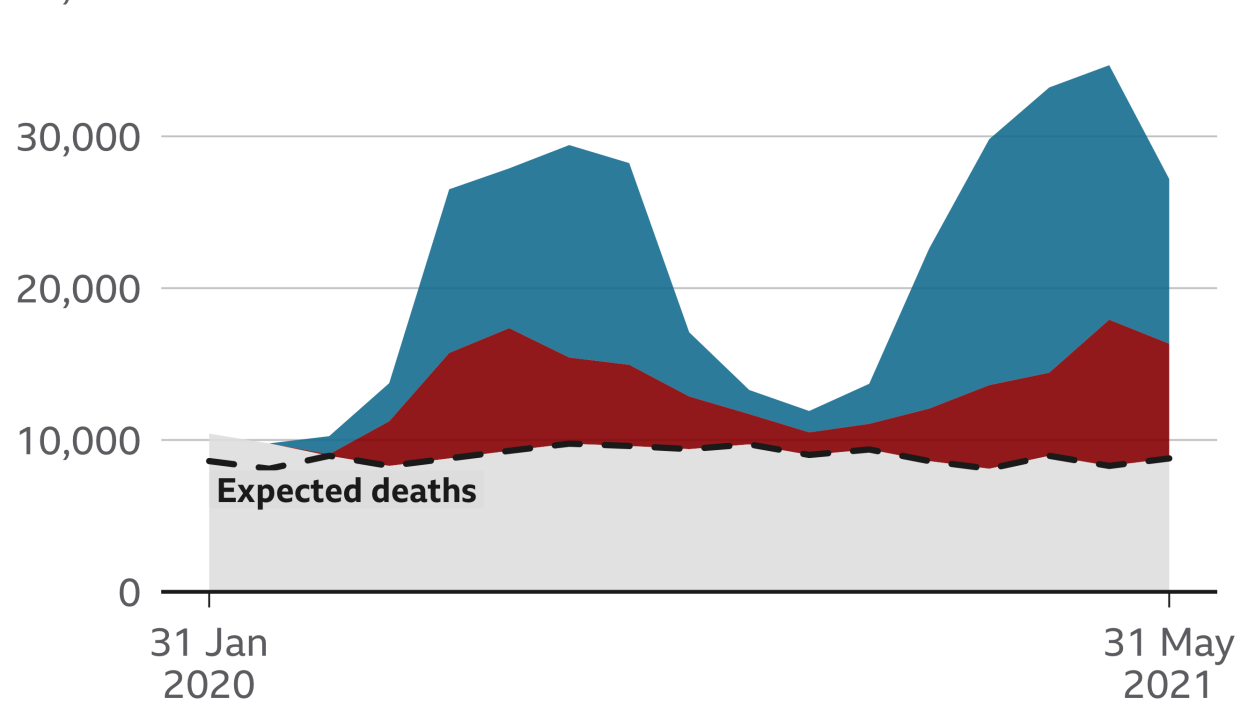
Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;373:n1442

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1442>

Published: 04 June 2021

## Total deaths in Peru compared with average Deaths per month before Covid redefinition on 31 May 2021

■ Other excess deaths ■ Official Covid-19 deaths ■ All other deaths



Source: Peru Ministry of Health, SINADEF

BBC



# GOVERNMENT MISINFORMATION

- “We think it is our duty to make public this updated information,” said the Peruvian prime minister, Violeta Bermúdez, announcing the result of the review.



**Peru has world's worst per capita Covid toll after death data revised**

Updated figures give country a per capita death toll of 500 per 100,000 people - double that of Brazil

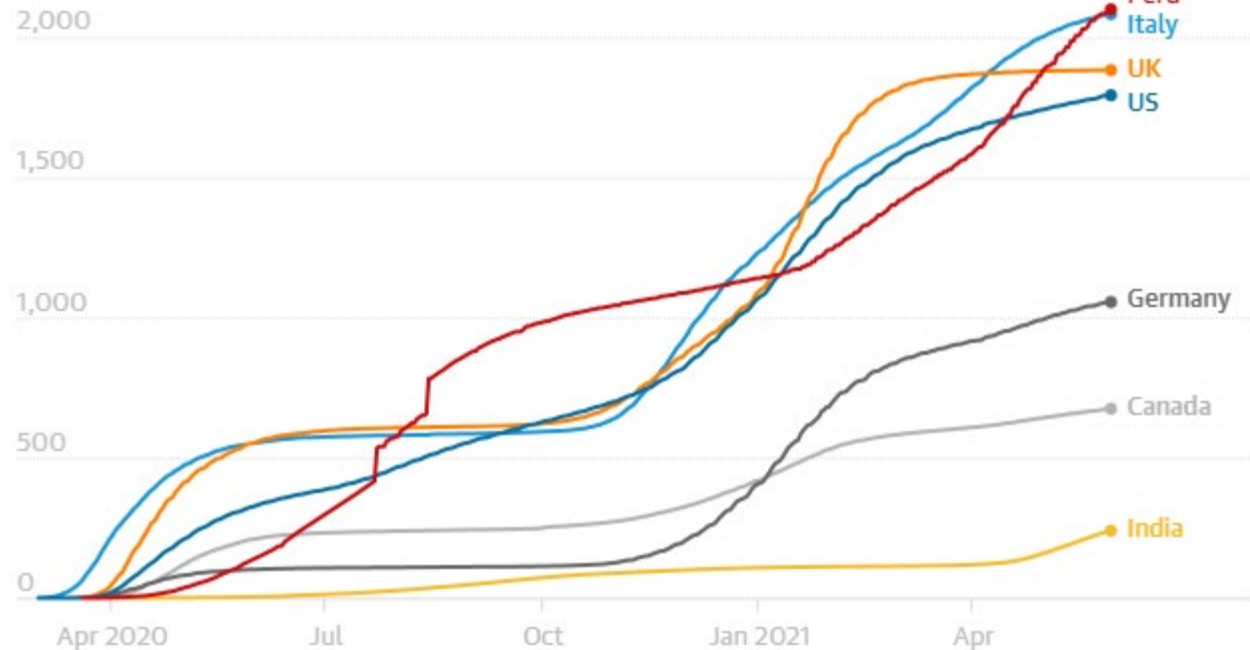
- “What is being said is that a significant number of deaths were not classified as caused by Covid-19,” the health minister, Óscar Ugarte, stated. He explained previously only those who people with a positive diagnostic test were considered to have died from the virus, but other criteria have since been incorporated.
- This story is not factually based as researchers insisted the data was wrong since the middle of 2020.

# PERU BECOMES THE WORST IN ONE DAY

## Misrepresented data for political convenience

### Peru has the world's highest confirmed death rate from Covid-19

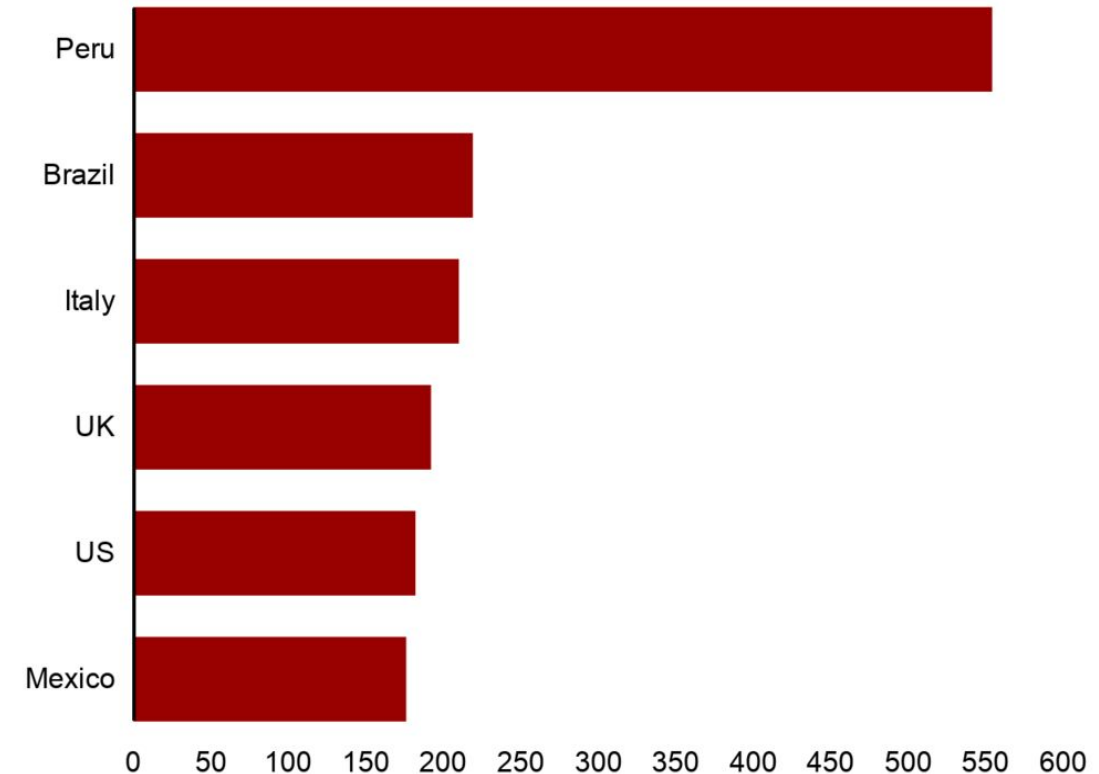
Deaths per million people, cumulative



Guardian graphic. Source: Our World in Data. Note: Counting methods vary from country to country

### Countries badly hit by Covid

Deaths per 100,000 people



Source: Peru Ministry of Health, Johns Hopkins University

BBC



LIMA, PERÚ



# **'VACUNAGATE' EN PERÚ**

**ESCÁNDALO POR VACUNACIÓN SECRETA DE FUNCIONARIOS**

**COVID-19**  
**LA SEMANA**  
**EN AMÉRICA**

# VACCINE-GATE

- Former president Martín Vizcarra received doses of the Sinopharm vaccine when it was in the third phase of clinical trials.
- There was a "vaccine festival" involving 487 businessmen, journalists, politicians, ambassadors, and university leaders.
- This was a massive vaccination scandal with abuse of power, misconduct, and illegal activities.
- The vaccines entered the country as part of a clinical trial, without sanitary registration, offered by a company with which Peru has signed a million-dollar contract.

## Peru vaccine scandal: Ex-president asked for early jab, doctors say

🕒 17 February



Martín Vizcarra received a vaccine in October, four months before Peru started rolling out its vaccination programme

## Covid-19: Peru's ex-leader accused of jumping vaccine queue tests positive

🕒 26 April



# POWER, POLITICS, AND MONEY



- Public criticism of Peru's government is not just about political elites having access to the vaccines first, but it is also about the malpractice of research universities administering vaccines before final clinical approval.
- “The problem we face in Peru is that the permanent political class uses influence and power for the benefit of their families and friends while other people are left to manage an enormous bureaucracy. This is precisely the reason our last six presidents and many former ministers have been charged with serious acts of corruption”, Patrick Palmieri, director of South America EBHC, a Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Affiliated Group, told The Lancet Infectious Diseases.
- Palmieri believes Vacuna-gate shows how corruption affects public health in Peru at all levels: “As an example of the corrupt practices impacting health, the country has a continuing oxygen crisis with public hospitals running out of oxygen in intensive care units.”

# LITTLE TO NO ACCOUNTABILITY

- Substantial research misconduct including breaches in research protocol, illegal use of unapproved vaccines, and falsifying documents.
- The university chancellor, vice-chancellors, and deans received illegal vaccinations.
  - University sanction – One year suspension for Dr. Germán Málaga Rodríguez and six months for Dr. Hugo García Lescano; and a warning for Dr. Javier Bustos Palomino.

GARCIA, HECTOR HUGO summary for Fiscal Year 2021

EXPORT

2 projects found						
Project Number ▲	Project	Organization	Admin IC	Direct Cost	Indirect Cost	Funding
<a href="#">2D43TW001140-21</a>	<a href="#">Training in Infectious Diseases in Peru - Time for Implementation Research</a>	UNIVERSIDAD PERUANA CAYETANO HEREDIA	FIC	\$279,046	\$15,914	\$294,960
<a href="#">5U19A1129909-05</a>	<a href="#">Improving Diagnostic and Management Tools for Neurocysticercosis (Peru-JHU TMRC Program)</a>	UNIVERSIDAD PERUANA CAYETANO HEREDIA	NIAID	\$512,435	\$35,328	\$547,763

## Vacunagate: Universidad Cayetano Heredia separa a Germán Málaga por un año

Málaga Rodríguez había sido suspendido en febrero de este año por la UPCH en en sus funciones como investigador principal del ensayo clínico de la vacuna de Sinopharm.



El médico Germán Málaga Rodríguez había sido suspendido en febrero de este año por la UPCH en en sus funciones como investigador principal del ensayo clínico de la vacuna de Sinopharm. (Foto: Difusión)





# PERU DOES VACCINATIONS QUITE WELL

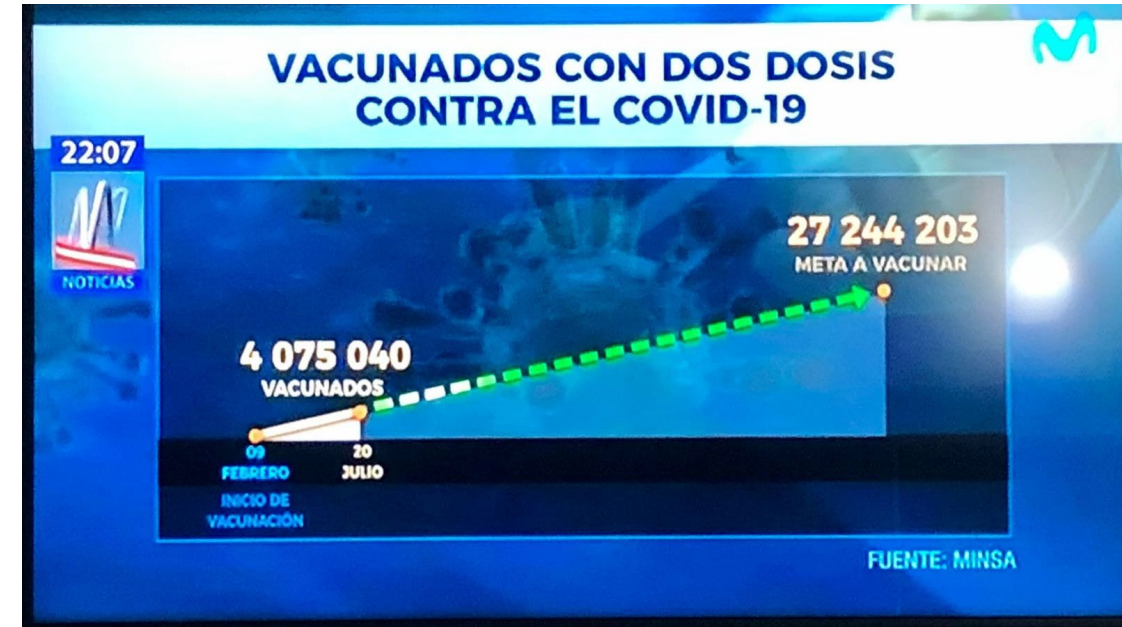
- Vacuna-gate frustrates many like Palmieri who are proud of previous vaccine programmes. “Despite all the problems in the Peruvian health sector, vaccinations are something we do very well. The reason is simple—nurses lead the vaccination campaigns. They are the vaccination foot soldiers”, Palmieri said.





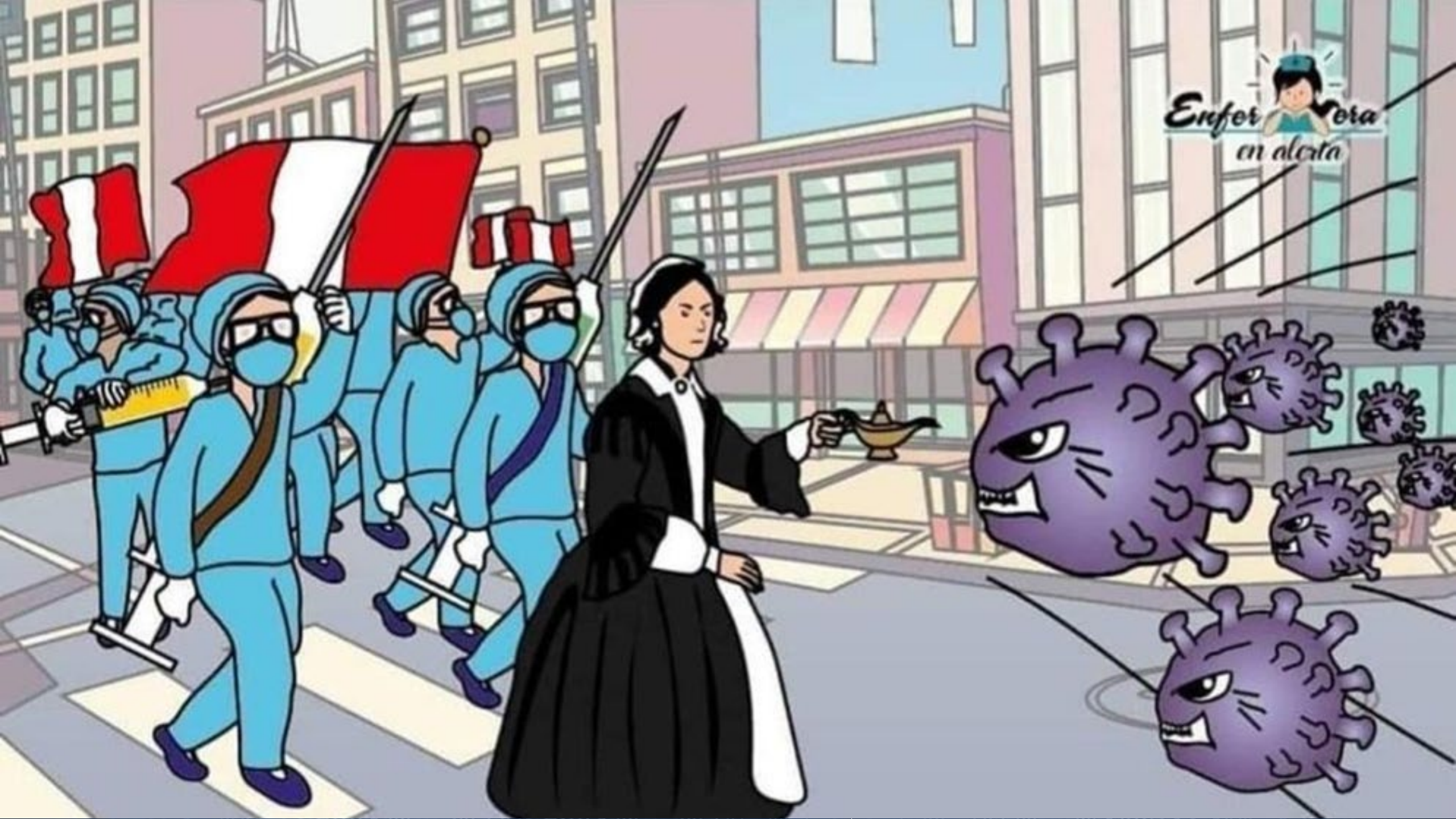
# VACCINATIONS ARE ADVANCING

- About 28 million adults to vaccinate
- Adults more than 50 years of age completed this week.



- Multiple contracts for vaccines include:
  - Sinopharm (38 million doses)
  - Pfizer (32 million doses)
  - Sputnik (20 million doses)
  - AstraZeneca (14 million doses)





Enfermera  
en alerta



# REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING



## Vacuna-gate escalates in Peru

The COVID-19 vaccine scandal in Peru reflects systemic corruption in the country that damages the health of the country's poorest. Georgina Kenyon reports.

A COVID-19 vaccine scandal in Peru, dubbed Vacuna-gate, has highlighted the nation's systemic corruption, from politicians down through the health ministry and within universities, according to many health experts. In February, government officials were given the COVID-19 vaccine (Sinopharm's BBIBP-CorV) months before the country was set to begin its vaccination programme. Anger at politicians' behaviour resulted in public protests.

But public criticism of Peru's government is not just about political elites having access to the vaccines first, but it is also about the malpractice of research universities administering vaccines before final clinical approval. "The problem we face in Peru is that the permanent political class uses influence and power for the benefit of their families and friends while other people are left to manage an enormous bureaucracy. This is precisely the reason our last six presidents and many former ministers have been charged with serious acts of corruption", Patrick Palmieri, director of South America EBHC, a Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI)-affiliated group, told *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. Palmieri believes Vacuna-gate shows how corruption affects public health in Peru at all levels: "As an example of the corrupt practices impacting health, the country has a continuing oxygen crisis with public hospitals running out of oxygen in intensive care units."

German Malaga, the doctor who administered some of the vaccines during the scandal, testified in parliament in early February. Malaga gave former President Martin Vizcarra the candidate vaccine during the clinical trial after being requested to do so by the president. The scandal

forced Vizcarra to resign along with the health and foreign affairs ministers and two vice ministers. Furthermore, the ethics committee at the National Institute of Health responsible for approving the protocol and monitoring the vaccine study was found to have family members vaccinated too. Two Peruvian universities, the Cayetano Heredia University and the National University of San Marcos, have been implicated, with the National Institute of Health suspending Cayetano Heredia University from conducting clinical trials in February.

Vacuna-gate frustrates many like Palmieri who are proud of previous vaccine programmes. "Despite all the problems in the Peruvian health sector, vaccinations are something we do very well. The reason is simple—nurses lead the vaccination campaigns. They are the vaccination foot soldiers", Palmieri said. Other researchers, such as epidemiologist Gabriel Carrasco-Escobar, believe Peru's public health system has been deteriorating over the past 10 years. "Public health in Peru used to be renowned for its performance in controlling epidemics. Unfortunately, in the last 10–20 years, the paucity in financial support to the sector has derailed some programmes", Carrasco-Escobar told *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. He believes Peru does not have a robust epidemiological surveillance system, and it is a major issue for controlling infectious diseases across communities. A lack of ethics in medical trials also worries him.

While public health efforts have been focused on COVID-19, measles, mumps, and rubella are spreading in the country, especially among the large influx of displaced people from Venezuela who have not been

vaccinated. There have been increasing cases of diphtheria. A dengue outbreak a few months before COVID-19 also affected poor communities, as did leptospirosis.

International non-governmental organisation Transparency International has published reports into Peru's health system highlighting serious issues relating to a decentralised health system and also multiple providers of services and insurance with little coordination. Extreme inequality still prevents many people from receiving basic health care. Palmieri believes the government has been focused on COVID-19 rather than on other infectious diseases in Peru as wealthy people were contracting the disease. He is calling for a systematic overhaul of the health system, with increased transparency in the expenditure of resources, full disclosures about potential conflicts of interest, and independent ethical oversight of research projects, with regulations similar to the USA and the EU, codifying research ethics into law. "We also need transparency for the appointments of people to regulatory agencies and expert panels specific to research. These processes are mysteriously filled in many cases", Palmieri concluded.

As Vacuna-gate escalates in Lima, nurses and doctors in remote communities continue to call for oxygen supplies and medical equipment to treat COVID-19, in a region where dengue rates are rising, in part due to warming temperatures. But as health advocates like Carrasco-Escobar believe, poor public health is directly linked to one significant problem: a serious lack of political will.

Georgina Kenyon

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