

Cytotec in the mass media

Known as Cytotec in the market, misoprostol is back at Brazilian news headlines

Mass Media avoids discussion contextualization

Federal Police and IRS operations in Macapá (AP) and Cuiabá (MT) withdraw medications without the ANVISA register from the market, among them the Cytotec. Drugstores that sold the products from the black market underwent interdiction. Surgical material used in abortion performances was found at one of those drugstores in Macapá. Orkut's ghost-communities that sell Cytotec were headlines again at Portal G1, from rede Globo. These and many other articles published mainly in the internet highlight the criminal aspects of the medicine usage in Brazil and overlook the historical and ideological background of its prohibition in the country.

In the eighties Brazil started to commercialize the Cytotec- with Italian origin- for the treatment of stomach ulcers, and it could be bought without medical prescription.

It was even distributed for free at medical offices and became a bestselling product in the country. In 1988, when the debate on the regulation of misoprostol was brought up by the media, the Health Ministry did not develop further discussions on the drug in order to avoid polemics. ANVISA's regulation of the medicine forbid its sales by national drugstores and restricted its use to intra-hospitals only, without, however, taking to public debate the related question of abortion legalization. Misoprostol issues have been deliberately regarded by the media as "police cases" since, and went straight from health issues headlights to the stigma of one more illegal abortive drug. The other side of the history hasn't been told.

Misoprostol is efficient at inducing labor or abortion of retained or dead fetus, one of the most difficult obstetric problems to deal with, and studies suggest its efficiency also in the treatment of post-delivery hemorrhage, one of the most frequent maternal death cause in Brazil. According to the paper published at the 2008 symposium entitled "The Role of Misoprostol in the Prevention of Maternal and Neonatal Morbidity and Mortality", the drug is registered in Brazil as "a medicine to induce labor and legal abortion, which usage is indicated in the *Technical Norm – Humanized Attention to Abortion Processes* and in the *Technical Norm for the Prevention and Treatment of Aggravations Resulting from Sexual Violence*, both published by the Health Ministry." Besides that, when "adequately used according to precise obstetric prescriptions , (...) it has huge potential at reducing women's health complications and death, as well as diminishing the cost of such care to the health system" and "even in clandestine situations, abortions induced by misoprostol are safer than the ones induced by other procedures."

The report brings many scientific evidences in favor of the medicine for the treatment of ob/gyn complications, and many international institutions indicate and support its usage. Outstanding recommendations came from the WHO in 2007, and there were other initiatives stimulating the use of the misoprostol, as the Guide for the Ob/Gyn use of Misoprostol published by the Federação Latino-Americana de Sociedades de Obstetrícia e Ginecologia (FLASOG), and the possibility of the medicine's inclusion in the " medical emergency-kit for APA and HPP cases, a tool created by a project to reduce maternal morbid-mortality caused by post-partum hemorrhage, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

ANVISA's restrictions to the use of *Cytotec* do not follow the Health Ministry's resolutions and contradict their own, considering that the agency has already included misoprostol in their Model List of Essential Medicines. Bureaucratic barriers inflicted by ANVISA for its usage by the SUS and the lack of information and prepare of health professionals are predicaments to be denounced to the authorities and the population.

COMISSÃO DE CIDADANIA E REPRODUÇÃO

Police reporters that cover the arrest of Cytotec from the market are not interested in divulging such aspects of the question and don't link the prohibition of misoprostol to the abortion legalization debate. It becomes very clear that persisting activities on the parallel and black market and orkut's ghost-communities are a result of the lack of information and a consequence of the restriction of women's reproductive and sexual rights in Brazil.