



A word from the President

Palavra do Presidente

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In times of crisis, unity transforms pain and suffering into hope. The devastating floods that struck Rio Grande do Sul in May 2024 mobilized civil society, institutions, and professionals from all fields. The Associação Médica do Rio Grande do Sul (AMRIGS) is proud to have been the first institution to open its doors to those affected, providing shelter, support, and care during one of the most difficult moments in our history.

The fundraising campaign organized by AMRIGS began with remarkable scenes of strength and solidarity. In the first few days alone, the foyer and theater of the association were completely filled with donations: clothing, mattresses, blankets, food, hygiene and cleaning products, as well as pet food. The sheer volume of donated items reached 50 tons, occupying even the hallways of the Medical Specialty Societies building. All of these supplies were promptly distributed to institutions, NGOs, shelters, and care homes, providing immediate and direct support to the victims of the disaster.

In a second phase, the campaign began receiving only medicines and medical supplies, transforming the AMRIGS headquarters into a strategic center for collection and distribution. The initiative was supported by the State Health Department of Rio Grande do Sul (SES RS), the Municipal Health Department of Porto Alegre (SMS POA), and the Regional Pharmacy Council of RS (CRF-RS). As a result, 130 tons of donations were received and stored across two floors of the institution.

In partnership with SMS POA, we organized the logistics for three care stations dedicated to victims rescued from the floods. During the first two weeks, temporary facilities were set up at Usina do Gasômetro, Pontal Shopping, and Viaduto José Eduardo Utzig to provide continuous reception and initial medical assessment for hundreds of people. AMRIGS coordinated the recruitment and scheduling of volunteer physicians, ensuring immediate assistance to the population.

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In the ongoing search for effective solutions, we developed a free telemedicine platform, offering medical consultations in a wide range of specialties to all affected municipalities. This initiative – born from a partnership between the AMRIGS and the Medical Union of RS (SIMERS), together with Teledoc – Grupo DOC and ShortMed – WebMed, and endorsed by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (ALRS) and the Council of Municipal Health Secretariats of Rio Grande do Sul (COSEMS/RS) – mobilized nearly 7,000 volunteer professionals across the country, including physicians, psychologists, and nurses. Over 5,000 consultations were performed, expanding access to healthcare even in the most heavily impacted regions.

Another important example of collaborative action was the implementation of the Lauduz telemedicine platform in eighteen shelters set up for people affected by the floods. With support from AMRIGS, Aché Laboratórios Farmacêuticos, and the initiative of Instituto Dunga – Seleção do Bem 8, Lauduz technology transformed these shelters into fully functional remote clinics. By using 22 telekits – each equipped with a screen, microphone, speaker, and internet connection – medical consultations were provided in pediatrics, psychiatry, and general medicine. This effort enabled qualified healthcare access during a critical time, relying on accessible technology and trained facilitators to operate the equipment.

We also joined forces with SMS POA, the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), Hospital Mãe de Deus, Unimed's Service Center, and the Brazilian Army's Operation Taquari 2 to set up an advanced vaccination post at our headquarters. During the most critical period, vaccines against Tetanus and Influenza A and B were offered, helping to prevent outbreaks and control disease among the affected population.

In collaboration with our Medical Specialty Societies, we developed and disseminated technical guidance notes aimed at both health professionals and the general public. Topics such as leptospirosis, scabies, pediculosis, skin wounds, as well as information on medication shortages and drug equivalency, were addressed with technical rigor and scientific responsibility.

In another line of action, AMRIGS and SIMERS formalized the donation of financial resources to the Regional Hospital of São Jerônimo. The funds, drawn from the institutions' Solidarity Fund, were used to purchase essential medical equipment to help expand the hospital's capacity to care for patients – one of the most heavily impacted facilities during the disaster.

More than 470 cities in Rio Grande do Sul were affected by the floods. It is estimated that around 575,000 people were left homeless and that approximately 2 million were impacted either directly or indirectly. In the face of this reality, AMRIGS responded with determination, coordination, and a deep commitment to preserving life.

This editorial is a tribute to all those who joined us on this journey: physicians, medical students, health care volunteers and volunteers from across civil society, pharmacists, technicians, public servants, administrators, and institutional partners. The solidarity shown reaffirms our mission as a medical association: to be a pillar of support for the health and dignity of the people of Rio Grande do Sul.

We remain united and steadfast in our commitment to rebuild our state. AMRIGS stands alongside the people of Rio Grande do Sul, stronger and more dedicated than ever to fulfilling its purpose.

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