



## The Pandemic and the Power of Partnerships



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At times I am impressed by the power of partnerships. I started working in this field by chance. A little over 20 years ago, while I was head of a business unit in a pharmaceutical industry, I was asked to prepare some studies and analysis for a future partnership between my product line with another company.

After this partnership I decided to pursue a solo career. My initial choice was corporate education, but I was very lucky to meet with some business development colleagues who welcomed me and encouraged me to join them in a simple enterprise that would complement the initial project, called Clube de Novos Negócios da Indústria Farmacêutica. This initiative proposed to bring these professionals together to promote training and meetings that would contribute to their networking.

In 2023 the Clube, as we affectionately call it, will celebrate its 20th anniversary. It could just be like any other date, but for me it's symbolic for a simple reason. For the last 2 years, partnerships have proved extremely important and relevant to one of the greatest challenges to human health.

A quick search at the Coronavirus Resource Center website at John Hopkins University & Medicine shows us the size of Covid 19 so far. There are approximately 598 million confirmed cases with more than 6,460,000 deaths. These numbers are even more impressive when we analyze their speed. The UN declared Covid 19 a pandemic on

March 11, 2020. In just over two years these devastating numbers have placed Covid 19 as one of the greatest health challenges mankind has ever faced.

But equally impressive was the global response to the crisis triggered by Coronavirus. To date, 5.33 billion people have received one dose of the Covid 19 vaccine, or 69,5% of the global population. This is an interesting point, because this type of vaccine was not available before the pandemic, that is, the vaccines were researched and developed quite quickly. At this point, I would like to highlight the role of the partnerships developed in the context of the response to Covid 19 and its importance.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), an entity linked to the UN, published an article called Partnerships in Response to Covid 19: Building Back Better Together that highlights the large number of partnerships created to provide an immediate response to Covid 19. According to the report, the important factors that accelerated these partnerships were the sense of urgency imposed by the situation, the pre-existing networking, previous experience in partnering, and the flexibility and use of digital technologies.

In another article, the World Bank points out that the combined efforts of scientists, private companies, international institutions, donors and governments were decisive to develop diagnostic tests, vaccines and treatments for Covid 19 in record time.

And that's where we come to the partnerships involving the pharmaceutical industry. In the article published in March 2021 by the World Bank, Ozlem Tureci and Ugur Sahin, founders of BioNTech, explain how a strategic partnership allowed them to develop a vaccine against COVID-19 using innovative technology: mRNA. This project, named Lightspeed, began in January 2020 shortly after the genome sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was shared as a public good. According to the company's co-founders, the partnership with Pfizer was important in speeding up the process, as it reduced the risks involved in developing a vaccine based on innovative technology. Other important points were the support for clinical development and production expansion.

This partnership resulted in the first vaccine for COVID-19 to be validated for Emergency Use Listing (EUL) by the World Health Organization on December 31st, 2020. In only 11 months the company went from starting to develop the vaccine to obtaining approval. An extremely short period compared to current research and development standards in the pharmaceutical industry. Agreements to increase production, distribution and access to new vaccines conducted in the public and private segment were also of great importance.

It is interesting to note that a segment such as the pharma industry, where high technology is present in such advanced research, can be so positively affected by partnerships, which are initially activities resulting from interactions between people. Something so simple, but so effective for generating services and products.