The impact of the ARV price savings negotiation process on the sustainability of the Brazilian AIDS relief policy

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Introduction:

The free provision of antiretroviral medications as a policy in the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) is mandatory since 1996. Annually, an average of 400 million dollars of the Ministry of Health (MoH) is allocated for the purchase of antiretroviral medications (ARV) to 350,000 people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA). Brazil offers 19 medicines on 37 presentation forms, of which: 13 are produced nationally and acquired from state or federal laboratories; 02, for which there isn’t local production or patent holders, are acquired via international body (PAHO and UNICEF); 22 are through direct negotiation with the patent holders in Brazil, its licensees or sales representatives are imported and represent an average of 59% of the total budget allocated.

To maintain the sustainability of the program, ensuring universal access to medicines for all people living with HIV/AIDS, the MoH conducts direct negotiations with patent holders in Brazil, its licensees or sales representatives for the purchase of these 22 medicines. At the price negotiation meeting, the MoH presents the trends of use of the drugs, according to the clinical protocols of treatment guidelines; consumption history as of the incorporation of each drug; international prices; maximum sales prices to the government. All such information is systematized to support the MoH team that sets goals and strategies for the new acquisition.

Methods:

Data related to the importation of ARV medication during the 2009-2013 period was analyzed through comparison of prices charged, annual budget and savings obtained in the price negotiations.

Results:

An average reduction of 27% was observed in the unit cost of imported medications comparing acquisitions in the 2009-2013 period. This percentage represents an estimated saving of 50 million dollars. Nine new formulations of antiretroviral medications were incorporated into the public health network in the same period.

Conclusion:

The process of price negotiation with each of the companies has become a critical success factor for maintenance of antiretroviral treatment for all people in need. The savings obtained allowed Brazil to incorporate new drugs to serve the population over the years. The improvement of trading strategies proves to be essential for sustainability of the policy.