

## S1 Sandra Ivana Mallo Barriga.mp3

**Speaker1:** That day I remember that we had been called to a meeting and we were all looking forward to what was going to be discussed at that meeting. And I remember my boss came in, looked at all of us. And there was a feeling in the air that he was going to say something important. And suddenly he said "We have two cases in Bolivia of covid-19. These are the first two cases that are being presented of two people who have arrived from Italy. And as soon as he finished saying that, I said "oh no!" And the first thing I did was to grab my cell phone and look in the news to see if the issue had already hit the press. And no, there was nothing. So at that moment I said to myself, well, let's get on with it, we are not at the forefront of the response and we have to rise to the occasion. In the evening the authorities gave the official information and obviously the next day the television channels, the newspapers, all with headlines "Covid arrived in Bolivia. Two cases are the first Covid-19 cases in the country." And of course, immediately the fact, the announcement. The atmosphere in the country was one of fear. Of course, the authorities made every effort to keep people calm and offer all the self-care messages, but it was really unavoidable. I remember that I was exposed to television 18 hours a day with the cell phone at every moment. And I remember the cell phone was tick, tick, tick, tick, notifications, every minute.

**Speaker1:** From information that came in and many of them were rumors, myths, false information about the origin of the virus, even how it was treated, how it could be cured. Facebook and WhatsApp were full of publications, recipes, self-care, traditional medicine, with herbs, with a series of concoctions. In short, the country began to experience what Covid-19 was all about. And I clearly remember that there was a moment of crisis. One of the first pandemic crises in the country, which is the explosion of cases in Beni [NE department of Bolivia]. The situation forced the authorities to move immediately to respond to the crisis. And I was watching television and suddenly I started to see a news item about a group of doctors who had gone to Beni. Supposedly to collaborate in the response tasks. But the news story showed how these doctors, with accompanying press cameras, entered homes. They didn't have masks because, you know, the use of masks was already universalized, but they didn't have masks and they went in and gave them chlorine dioxide in their mouths through syringes. Or it could also be seen in the images that they were administering chlorine dioxide in vein through serums. When I saw this, the first thing I did was to go to Google and check the word,

the words chlorine dioxide. I search and the first thing that comes up was that it was a chemical, a disinfectant, something that was used for cleaning and for bleaching. And when I read that the first thing I said. "What's going on? This is crazy." And from there I'm not even talking about it. The issue of chlorine dioxide became a state issue because universities started to produce chlorine dioxide for later commercialization. The Senate itself took out a law or a bill authorizing the production and marketing and consumption of chlorine dioxide as a preventive measure and as a measure to treat Covid-19. This was despite the fact that there were even demonstrations from the pharmacological colleges saying that chlorine dioxide was not, at any time, a drug that was on the country's essential drug list or that it could be used to treat Covid-19.

These physicians who were awarded. The power of scientific truth, they called themselves the doctors for the truth. They came to have spaces on television via internet through YouTube, where they gave explanations about the use of chlorine dioxide, its enormous benefits and even the possibility that it cured more than 200 diseases, including cancer. Then people, in desperation, began to line up at pharmacies to get a small amber bottle where the product was supposed to be. I remember that some people even acquired this in a clandestine way, if you will, before it came out, of course, all these regulations that I just told you about. I remember that a couple of friends showed me a chat on WhatsApp, how they contacted a person to sell them chlorine dioxide.

**Speaker1:** And I remember perfectly that dialogue of "Hello", "hello". "Do you sell chlorine dioxide?" "Yes. How much do you need?" "I need. How is the form of presentation?" "Bottles are sold, my friend." Do you know what I mean? And it would give him the price and give him a location via GoogleMaps for the person to go and pick up the product after canceling. Then the people I want to reach that one that through WhatsApp people started to also acquire chlorine dioxide in this way, No, because we were in confinement time. I believe that this passage has been the most damaging passage that we have been able to live through in the pandemic stage and it has been, of course, a product, in addition to the infodemic, a product of disinformation, of misinformation. And one is helpless in the face of this type of stories, in the face of this type of situations that we know exactly that there were reports from the hospital services that were announcing that people were presenting themselves, not because of Covid problems, but because of problems due to the consumption of chlorine dioxide. That

means there have been people who have died with their stomachs punctured by this. This should lead us to reflect on what we should or should not believe about chlorine dioxide and this type of information that can be very harmful to the health of individuals and communities.