

SERIES DE INVESTIGACIÓN DE REOALCEI

Editor

Lisandro José Alvarado-Peña

Avalado por:

Red Académica Internacional

“Estudios Organizacionales en América Latina, el
Caribe e Iberoamérica” REOALCeI



Series de investigación de REOALCEI

Lisandro José Alvarado-Peña (Editor)

HIGH
RATE
CONSULTING

Series de investigación de REOALCEI

Primera edición, Octubre 2021. EE.UU.

Cómo citar: Alvarado-Peña, L. J. (Ed) (2021). Series de investigación de REOALCEI. High Rate Consulting / REOALCEI. <https://doi.org/10.38202/seriesinvreoyalcei>

Palabras clave: Investigación; universidades; industrias; gobierno; sector solidario; estudios organizacionales

Editor: Lisandro José Alvarado-Peña.

Portada: Ronald Morillo

Diseño: Equipo de diseño High Rate Consulting Co

Revisión de estilo: Fidas Arias Odón

ISNI High Rate Consulting: www.isni.org/isni/0000000492376119

Políticas Editoriales: <https://www.highrateco.com/politicas>

e-ISBN: 978-1-7365231-3-1 | **ISBN:** 978-1-7365231-4-8

235 p



Este libro ha sido arbitrado por pares ciegos.

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COVID-19 policy and insurance coverage

COVID-19 póliza y cobertura de seguro

Cómo citar:

Altamirano Santiago, M.; Silva Hernández, F.; Martínez Prats, G.; Martínez García, R. (2021). COVID-19 policy and insurance coverage. En L. J. Alvarado-Peña (Ed), *Series de investigación de REOALCEI*. High Rate Consulting / REOALCEI. <https://doi.org/10.38202/seriesinvreolcei.07>

Abstract

Major medical expense insurance is an investment that covers most of the expenses incurred by medical intervention or treatment. Given the panorama of the new reality derived from SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19), it puts people and their rights in a state of vulnerability and risk; it is important to analyze the role of policies and their coverage in major medical expenses due to COVID-19. This document identifies the landscape of insurance companies in Mexico, which in the wake of the coronavirus included or strengthened their mechanisms for indemnification, deductible, and coinsurance. This was because the Asociación Mexicana de Instituciones de Seguros (AMIS), the Comisión Nacional de Seguros

y Fianzas (CNSF) and the Secretaría de Hacienda, agreed on care measures for policyholders. According to AMIS, Mexico had a 10% increase in the contracting of insurance for major medical expenses and a 3% increase in life insurance premiums; although there is talk of an increase that represents a smaller number of people who are unaware or are not interested in the acquisition of insurance for major expenses, they must foresee that it is an investment that provides security and certainty of protection in the future not only in the individual (family) aspect but also in a collective -group way (public institutions and companies) due to the impact it has on all sectors.

Keywords: insured, coinsurance, deductible, major medical expenses policy.

Resumen

El seguro de gastos médicos mayores es una inversión que cubre la mayor parte de gastos suscitados por una intervención médica o tratamiento. Ante el panorama de la nueva realidad derivada del SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19), en el que pone en estado de vulnerabilidad y riesgo a las personas y sus derechos, es importante analizar el papel de las pólizas y su cobertura en gastos médicos mayores por COVID-19. Este documento identifica el panorama de las compañías de seguros en México, que a raíz del coronavirus incluyeron o fortalecieron sus mecanismos para indemnización, deducible y coaseguro. Esto se debió a que la Asociación Mexicana de Instituciones de Seguros (AMIS), la Comisión Nacional de Seguros y Fianzas (CNSF) y la Secretaría de Hacienda, acordaron medidas de atención para los asegurados. De acuerdo a la AMIS, México tuvo un incremento del 10% en la contratación de seguros para gastos médicos mayores y un 3% en las primas de seguros de vida, aunque se habla de un incremento es una cifra que representa un número menor de personas que desconocen o no les interesa la adquisición de seguro de gastos mayores, deben prever que es una inversión que brinda seguridad y certeza de protección en el futuro no sólo en el aspecto individual (familiar) sino también de manera colectiva -grupala (instituciones públicas y empresas) debido al impacto que tiene en todos los sectores.

Palabras clave: asegurado, coaseguro, deducible, póliza de gastos médicos mayores.

Introduction

COVID-19 policy and insurance coverage are structured documents in a methodological process with a qualitative approach (Garza, 2013), with a documentary

scope based on the review of documents, scientific articles, official and institutional reports that delimited the study of the importance of major medical expenses insurance. The exegetical method understood as the "process of interpretation and study of legal texts, and their regulation" (Villabella, 2009), is reflected in the pronouncement of the Insurance and Finance Institutions Law. The descriptive scope was supported per was described by the author Luhmann (2006), who states "society cannot be observed from the outside because the dynamics is a function of it, which leads to understand it from its incidence."

In this sense, the systematization process is based on: 1) insurance and its coverage in Mexico, with the describing aim the legal framework for the protection, access, and guarantee of the right to health, through the description of the general and statistical aspects of the pandemic. 2) characterize from the review on the official websites, twelve insurers with the largest presence in Mexico according to the Asociación Mexicana de Instituciones de Seguros (AMIS) and the Comisión Nacional para la Protección y Defensa de los Usuarios de Servicios Financieros (CONDUSEF, 2019). We proceeded to identify twelve insurance companies who on their website established the guidelines of policy and coverage to people in time of pandemic and epidemic to the year 2020, this in terms of access, quality, cost and satisfaction, and impact of the different modes of coverage; all insurers were included (12).

The global situation of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic, COVID-19, represents losses in several sectors. Undoubtedly, the health sector has presented a state of crisis regarding medical care for patients infected by the virus. Faced with this scenario, people looked for mechanisms of action and strategies that would allow them to access medical care to survive in case of infection. The role of the insurers represented a challenge since some contemplated under certain schemes criteria of care in the pandemic policy; for others, it represented enabling a policy with comprehensive care coverage.

In the case of the Mexican state, according to the Mexican Association of Insurance Institutions-AMIS (2021a), COVID-19 represented the third costliest incident; for the year 2021, only 11.3 million people have economic protection medical expenses insurance, which is equivalent to 1.35% of the population.

From 2020 to January 2021, according to AMIS (2021a), insurers covered the expenses of 23,306 users who had to be treated for COVID-19, with an average cost of 410,800 pesos in-hospital care. The AMIS highlights that with respect to life insurance from 2020 to January 2021, there were 46,371 cases with an average amount of \$ 223,941, having in terms of gender that 29% occur in women and 71% in men; that is, 7 of each 10 cases occur in men.

Finally, this document identifies and exposes the coverage of the insurance policy of major medical expenses in two areas, the first referring to the regulatory aspect of the Mexican state, the second concerning insurance and bonding agents in Mexico in times of SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19) detailing the coverage of the policies, which are detailed in the following sections.

Legal aspects of insurance and surety agents in Mexico based on the standard

On March 30, 2020, Mexico declares as a health emergency due to force majeure, the epidemic generated by the SARS-CoV2 virus, COVID-19 (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2020).

The rights to health and life are considered in the Mexican state as a human right (Cámara de Diputados, 1917). Therefore, in the face of contagion that puts both rights at risk (interdependence and indivisibility), it is important to know or deepen respect for the insurers' policy coverage criteria in this new reality.

This right includes the right to the highest level of well-being (Laurell, 2011), within the possibilities of each state and, although no health system (Ramírez-Ortiz et al., 2020) was prepared for the challenges in terms of providing health services. Services generated by the pandemic, what is unacceptable are the profound socioeconomic differences between the different regions or States (García-Echeverry et al., 2020).

In the case of Mexico, according to the statistics of the Federal Government through the Ministry of Health, in mid-August 2020, 517,714 confirmed cases had been registered; 568,359 negatives; 84,934 suspects; 56,543 deaths; 351,372 recovered, and 29,306 assets. Of these figures, 47.19% are women, and 52.81% are men; 26.25% were hospitalized and 73.75% dispensaries; besides that, it is important to point out that the main comorbidities are hypertension with 19.74%; obesity with 18.59%; diabetes with 15.91% and smoking with 7.18% (Subsecretaría de prevención y promoción de la salud, 2020).

By mid-year 2021, according to the Undersecretariat of Prevention and Health Promotion, in Mexico 2,429,631 total cases and 228,569 deaths had been confirmed by COVID-19 (Subsecretaría de prevención y promoción de la salud, 2021).

The above is linked to the fact that this type of disease caused hundreds of infections and deaths, reality put us as a society in a state of defenselessness, risk, and vulnerability; implicit in a lack of information and disinterest on the part of people regarding the insurers both in the acquisition and for those who had the product and the

demand for the coverage in their policy arose in the face of the pandemic.

The Ley de Instituciones de Seguros y de Finanzas (Cámara de Diputados, 2013) states the organization, operation, and functioning of Insurance Institutions; in this regard, it is necessary to state the following articles on the subject.

Ley de Instituciones de Seguros y de Finanzas (Cámara de Diputados, 2013) Article 25. Authorizations to organize, operate and function as an Insurance Institution or Mutual Society, will refer to one or more of the following operations and insurance lines: I. Life.

II. Accidents and illnesses, in one or more of the following lines: personal accidents; medical and health expenses.

III. Damages in: a) civil liability and professional risks; b) maritime and transport; c) fire; d) agricultural and animal; y) automobiles; f) credit; g) surety; h) credit to the house; i) financial guarantee; j) catastrophic risks; k) various and l) special ones declared by the Office, as provided by law.

This article deals with insurance operations and branches and emphasizes to anyone who wishes to establish an insurance institution or mutual society to which branch or operation can be constituted.

Ley de Instituciones de Seguros y de Finanzas (Cámara de Diputados, 2013) Article 27. The insurances included within the enumeration of operations and branches indicated in articles 25 and 26 of the Law, are the following:

IV. For the branch of medical expenses, the insurance contracts intended to cover medical, hospital, and other expenses necessary for the recovery of the health or vital vigor of the insured when they have been affected by an accident or illness. The Insurance Institutions and Mutual Societies authorized to operate this branch may offer as an additional benefit within their policies the coverage of preventive medicine services only on an indemnity basis.

It has to cover what is contemplated according to the contracted policy and indicates the degree to which compensation can be made. However, it is subject to the company, and the law only establishes the criteria that must be adhered to by right.

Ley de Instituciones de Seguros y de Finanzas (Cámara de Diputados, 2013) Article 208.- To strengthen the insurance culture and extend the benefits of its protection to a greater part of the population, the Insurance Institutions, attending to the operations and branches that they have authorized, as well as the insu-

rance and coverage that they market, must offer a standardized basic product for each of the following coverages:

- I. Death, in the life operation;
- II. Personal accidents, in the operation of accidents and illnesses;
- III. Medical expenses, in the operation of accidents and illnesses;
- IV. Health, in the operation of accidents and illnesses, and
- V. Civil liability, in the automobile branch.

For the purposes of the Law, standardized basic insurance products will be understood as those that cover those risks faced by the population, which can be homologated due to their common characteristics and whose purpose is to satisfy specific protection needs of the population.

Access to a standardized basic product seeks to expand the portfolio of policyholders with a sense of responsibility and personal-family well-being.

Derived from the SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19) pandemic, people have sought or taken greater consideration to acquire insurance policies that allow coverage individually (family) and group (public and private institutions). However, at the time of your contract, it is important to consider aspects of major expense insurance, such as the 30-days period from when the purchase of the insurance is acquired to the start of the same; the desire to buy a policy at the time the person is hospitalized; as well as the acquisition of insurance when costs have already been incurred prior to its acquisition and coverage initiation.

It is necessary to consider minimum elements of coverage with each interest insurer (Borja, 2005) because the cost varies according to the interests and needs of each person; the deductible you want to pay, considering consulting with a certified insurance agent.

Insurance and surety agents in Mexico in times of SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19)

The uncertainty in Latin America regarding COVID 19 drastically affected formal and informal labor productivity. It is denoted that in the absence of unemployment insurance in most countries and of sufficient savings to face the loss of labor income, the loss of employment in the formal sector led to an increase in unemployment, a marked expansion of the informal sector, and thus low productivity jobs (Weller, 2020).

In the same vein, based on the health crisis, it is estimated that 30 million people out of approximately 160 million people with a job occupation in 2019 have applied for unemployment insurance support, so those people who lost their job were invalidated in access to this type of insurance (Altig et al., 2020).

The AMIS (2020) identifies major medical expenses insurance as a financial product that, in exchange for a premium (insurance cost), guarantees that the expenses generated by illness or accident are covered for the holder and the beneficiaries, having as a limit the sum insured established in the policy. In this sense, it is also important to consider that the insurance companies, in collaboration with the Medical Colleges, indicate the degree of responsibility of the hospitals.

The role of insurance companies regarding the policy and its coverage of major medical expenses is related to access to health as a right. The coronavirus reflects an aspect that requires medical attention and service, which implies an economical expense in the care during and after a person is infected (expenses in diagnosis, medicine, medical consultation, test, hospitalization, intensive therapy, sequelae of the disease).

The global health crisis from the COVID-19 pandemic (Mendoza, 2020) has led to a reconsideration of the role of care or omission of insurers worldwide. There is the major medical expenses insurance product; in which it has been considered to cover the treatment of the person infected with COVID-19, regularly for access and its coverage depends on the insurance of medical expenses that have been contracted and the description that is made of the disease.

Table 1
Insurance policy and coverage in Mexico

Insurance carrier	Policy and coverage
Allianz Care	Customers with symptoms of fever and cough have visited a doctor who has prescribed the test, are covered by the reasonable and usual costs of testing and treating COVID-19 infection, any resulting complications within the limits of their policy. As a result, the person must request that the test bill be accompanied by the prescription confirming the suspicion of COVID-19 infection. Subject to your policy, it covers medical evacuations (as for other illnesses) if treatment is not available locally. It grants transportation of people infected with COVID-19 through a negative pressure "bubble" installed on the aircraft, protecting medical personnel and crew. However, it is important that local governments can ban international evacuations and insist on local treatment depending on the country (Allianz Care, 2020).

AXA seguros

It offers the free service to relatives of health sector employees who could die due to COVID-19. Regarding the "major medical expenses," it covers: "upper airway infection caused by a virus is covered with the deductible and general conditions; for people diagnosed with coronavirus, consultations, laboratory studies, and hospitalization, will be covered within limits contracted; requiring the return of costs incurred or direct payment transactions "(AXA seguros, 2020).

Best Doctor. Insurance

This insurer has medical coverage against COVID-19, but adjustments have been made to its policies. It grants the facility through digital means such as email, phone number, BD2go application, LiveChat, patient care messaging, and return service for the person to contact their medical provider in advance and inform him about their symptoms (Best Doctor Insurance, 2020).

BX +

Those products of major medical expenses governed by the contract, either individually or collectively, cover people diagnosed with a current policy with coronavirus and even declared a pandemic. The responsibility of the coverage applies according to the generalities of the contracted product. Those "hired of an individual or group nature have basic coverage of death due to illness, whoever dies as a result of Covid-19, their beneficiaries would receive the insured sum contracted, according to the general conditions of the product they have purchased" (BX+, 2020).

Citibanamex

El servicio en citibanamex no torga de forma pública la cobertura de la persona asegurada por ellos y que se encuentre enfermo de covid. En su página web sólo exhorta al asegurado hacer un tiempo para revisar los términos del contrato, las exclusiones, la red de médicos y hospitales, la documentación necesaria para hacer uso del seguro. En caso de tener alguna duda, el asegurado debe poner en contacto vía telefónica con un agente y además de aclararlas, buscar hacer los ajustes necesarios para que el seguro se adecue al estilo de vida de la persona, a sus necesidades y tratar de aumentar el límite de la cobertura (citibanamex, 2020).

GNP Seguro

Coverage regarding COVID-19 is not direct. However, in 2020 this company indicates that during the pandemic, there have been reports of "more than 1,500 accidents in children under 15 years of age, for which they have paid an amount greater than 16 million pesos; representing an increase of 12 % in the number of cases compared to the same period of 2019 "(GNP Seguros, 2020).

Inbursa

This company foresees that all those insured who require hospital care due to an alarm or their health condition will be treated and reviewed by hospitals in the network according to the plan they have contracted, which have protocols that determine if they are candidates for the test. COVID-19 will be covered as part of the diagnostic protocol

	<p>once the deductible has been exceeded and the coinsurance participation. However, it points to a condition that the expense is not covered whether the asymptomatic insured is tested and is negative.</p> <p>In the event that the insured is abroad and the policy has international coverage, it must be communicated to the company's telephone lines. In the case of pregnant women, according to the contracted plan, the policy will be covered once the deductible has been exceeded, with the participation of the contracted coinsurance on your face. (Inbursa, 2020).</p>
MAPFRE	<p>It covers hospital expenses, medicines, diagnostic aids, and medical fees, according to the clauses of the policy. As long as the policy was current and the condition was not pre-existing, the insurance also covers the diagnostic test when it is confirmed and exceeds the deductible cost in policy coverage. The claim options are two; the first by direct payment and the second by return.</p> <p>In case of finding abroad, the coverage is only applicable if you have international coverage or travel assistance; some additional benefits are online medical guidance from the insurer's portal; preferential networks of doctors and hospitals with discounts, services, and other benefits.</p> <p>For those people who had the service, it offered the insured who needed "hospital care for complications derived from the contagion of COVID-19 and that at the time of requesting such care it was not possible to enter any of the hospitals of the level that they had contracted derived for a saturation, could attend a higher hospital level and MAPFRE waived the additional coinsurance established in the general conditions of the contracted product due to a change in level. This utility was applied to the products Medical Protection for You, Traditional Individual Major Medical Expenses and Medical Expenses Seniors Group for hospital admissions from May 15, 2020 to June 30, 2020. " (MAPFRE, 2020).</p>
MetLife	<p>The product "Major medical expenses" covers the costs for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in accordance with the general conditions of the contracted policy, as long as the condition has been diagnosed by a doctor legally authorized to practice the profession and thereafter exceeds the contracted deductible; For these types of products, the Major Medical Expenses policy covers diagnostic costs, medical fees, medical supplies, drugs, and hospital costs. In the same way, the "life products" product covers death from this disease according to the general conditions of the contracted policy. This insurer covers the illness due to Coronavirus-COVID-19 (MetLife, 2020).</p>
Atlas Insurance. The company tailored to you	<p>It distinguishes that all those insured in the Individual and Collective Life and Major Medical Expenses Policy cover the Individual and Collective Life Insurance and Major Medical Expenses in its different versions. The costs incurred once it was medically diagnosed and according to the contracted</p>

	<p>condition. In the policy covering pandemics, claims can be for direct payment or reimbursement. For those insured in Travel Insurance Policies, it covers 100% of medical assistance related to the virus; notified that policyholders whose travel begins on May 12, 2020, are excluded from coverage related to COVID-19 (Seguros Atlas, 2020).</p>
<p>Seguros Monterrey NewYork Life</p>	<p>The policy coverage for major medical expenses, being covered against infection of the upper airways caused by a virus. It specifies the need to carry out before the respective presence of the insured (deductible, coinsurance, copayment, and collaboration based on the General Conditions.</p> <p>You are covered for consultations, laboratory studies, or hospitalization up to the contracted limits. In case of presenting symptoms and not requiring hospitalization, grants the option of attending a trusted doctor, consecutively processing the return, with the condition that the costs are higher than the contracted deductible (or franchise). In case of demanding hospitalization, the procedure is carried out via refund or direct payment. Finally, all the products of this insurer cover death due to coronavirus (Seguros Monterrey New York Life, 2020).</p>
<p>Zurich</p>	<p>According to the general conditions of the major medical expenses policies, it remains protected like any infectious disease or derived from an epidemic or pandemics (Zurich, 2020).</p>

Source: Author's elaboration based on the official site of the insurance companies.

The integration or consideration of the policy coverage regarding COVID-19 represented a watershed in Mexico because this type of protection for the insured was excluded. In 2020 the National Insurance and Bonding Commission (CNSF), in coordination with the Mexican Association of Insurance Institutions, AC (AMIS), agreed on a series of measures to guarantee the attention to the insured; these actions were:

extension in terms of information requirements, facilitate the delivery of mandatory regulatory reports, extension of deadlines in endorsement of cedulas, regulatory facility so that insurers that did not have included in their policy or had excluded the risks derived from COVID-19 the establish in the products, regulatory facility for insurers, extend deadlines in the payment of premiums by loyal and vulnerable policyholders, without penalties or cancellation of policies, maintain the application of examinations to certify new agents. (Secretaría de Hacienda, CNSF, Comisión Nacional de Seguros y Finanzas, 2020).

In Mexico, the coronavirus COVID-19 is considered a respiratory disease. It is estimated average cost of hospital care for this virus amounts to 404 thousand pesos (according to the coverage contracted, the insurance may include consultations, medical fees, studies, hospitalization, transfers, emergencies abroad, etc.), an amount that hardly a person could disburse without jeopardizing the financial stability of his family. When you have insurance, this landscape changes. You only periodically pay an amount (premium) that is less than what you would pay for total hospital expenses if you become ill (AMIS, 2021b).

The vulnerability state of the family to COVID-19 infers in an interdependent and indivisible way with family law, since the right to food and life are violated, at the moment that the guardians or those responsible for the family are in unemployment violating labor law (Garat et al., 2020), along the same lines non-discrimination, the right to emerging health care, the right to freedom of expression, the right to access to justice, access to information, the right to education, the right to social security, the right to water and to consider these aspects in a preponderant way to people from vulnerable groups. Likewise, it is inescapable to consider people with chronic degenerative diseases, immunocompromised people, cancer patients, or undergoing chemotherapeutic treatment.

Regarding coverage care by insurance companies, they had to strengthen or create guarantee mechanisms for their insured, in an effort not to violate the right to health. Before the act of pandemic insurers, it is important to buy insurance for major medical expenses. It is an investment and savings that safeguards the patrimony without putting it at risk in an emergency.

That leads to the fact that the pandemic has impacted all major economies and industries, and the insurance market in Latin America is no exception. The immediate challenges are inscribed with the crisis and the economic recession, with strong consequences for the insurance sector. Insurers review the coverage provided under their product range, and governments are establishing new laws that directly and indirectly impact risk management and insurance. The particularities of coverage are complex, it depends a lot on the specific language of the insured policy, so a careful analysis by experts is required, given that all types of insurance will be directly or indirectly affected by this pandemic, which involves a catastrophic long-term risk and a global scope, it is important to evaluate how the insurance market in Latin America is at the time of the crisis, just to list a few:

- The financial impact on insurers will come from three sources: 1) Claims covered and paid, depending on their business mix (there will be direct and indirect claims); 2) Erosion of the asset portfolio, depending on the

investment mix they made; 3) Reduction in future income due to lower interest rates and other investment income and downgrading of insurance rate bases (Towers, 2020).

- There is an increased concern about the state of the life insurer's balance sheet (Towers, 2020).
- Rating agencies actively review rating statuses, mainly in reinsurance markets, including some downgrades (Towers, 2020).

The current situation is likely to lengthen further the market upside conditions we were experiencing before COVID-19. Which leads us to consider new scenarios in which the industrial sector must be considered in terms of being under greater scrutiny, currently include health care, elder care, hospitality, entertainment, aviation, and energy. The factor of the rate increases experienced at the end of last year and in the first months of this year are still occurring and, depending on the insurance, with an immediate acceleration of hikes at this point (MARSH & McLENNAN COMPANIES, 2020). The industries and companies most affected by the economic crisis face reduced capacity and unfavorable terms, as subscribers fear bankruptcies. For facilities reused due to the pandemic, there is uncertainty regarding coverage, as they can have a significant change in risk. Inactive plants and installations should be reviewed for safety and maintenance reasons. The impact of COVID-19 and the current economic crisis have precipitated the hardening of insurance markets and the need to balance risk management with the organization's priorities in times of scarcity of resources and especially liquidity. At the same time, some countries and cities begin to reopen businesses to revive the economy; we are faced with a new world, a reality where what applied in the past no longer applies.

Conclusion

Based on the objectives set out in this document, the minimum criteria that insurance institutions must have been identified in Mexico's regulatory framework, through the Law de Instituciones de Seguros y de Finanzas, the "Ley General de Instituciones y Sociedades Mutualistas de Seguros," and the "Ley General de Sociedades Mercantiles Anónimas" also seek with "standardized commodity" to increase the purchase of the insurance product so that people are not limited to the benefit of personal interest, safeguarding their wealth. Although measures were taken by the corresponding bodies in the insurance sector, it is important that the Mexican government legislates in this regard and be able to consider aspects such as the pandemic and epidemic in terms of the regulation, procedure, and attention of the products they offer with respect to the coverage of the policies.

Regarding the categorization of insurance in Mexico, the twelve companies from different criteria consider the expansion and integration of greater coverage of the insurance policy for major medical expenses since 2020 as of the Comisión Nacional de Seguros y Fianzas (CNSF) in coordination with the Asociación Mexicana de Instituciones de Seguros, A.C. (AMIS) will agree on measures to guarantee the attention to the insured.

Today, in the face of the pandemic, millions of people globally have been put in a state of vulnerability and risk; According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that the number of deaths from coronavirus is 2 or 3 times higher than the 3.4 million deaths (World Health Organization, 2021). These numbers worldwide and those already cited at the national level suppose reconsidering access to and responsibility to acquire a major expense insurance service. Even when the number of people hiring the service in Mexico increased, it turns out to be still a lower number than what is estimated.

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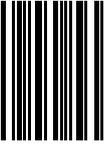
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