South Africa's voice of reason

If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?

It's been 35 years of studying epidemics

CARLOS AMATO

Epidemiologist at Oxford University, the late Dr. Carlos Amato's words are amply echoed in the collective public perception of how best to go about containing a disease. His insights, gleaned from his numerous publications, are distilled here in the form of a straightforward guide for navigating the complexities of epidemic control.

"If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?" These words are a stark reminder of the uncertainty and unpredictability that accompany the study of epidemics. The goal is to prevent, not to cure, and we are often left to grapple with the unknowns.

The choices we make - in terms of vaccination strategies, public health interventions, and even the way we communicate - can have profound implications. The more we understand about the virus and its behavior, the better prepared we can be to mitigate its impact.

"It's not about the disease. It's about the response." These words emphasize the importance of the human factor in epidemic control. The way we interact with each other, the policies we implement, and the support we provide can make all the difference in controlling an outbreak.

"We don't know what it was we were doing." This statement underscores the uncertainty and unpredictability of the research process. It is a reminder that even the most well-planned interventions can fail, and that success is often the result of a combination of factors, some predictable and some not.

"If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?" These words are a call to action, a reminder that we must continue to learn and adapt as we try to understand and control epidemics.

The words of Carlos Amato are a testament to the complexity and uncertainty of the field of epidemiology. They serve as a reminder to always be open to new ideas and approaches, and to be humble in the face of the unknown.