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Scientific Editor

Public Health Practice, a new section

From this issue (issue 1 of volume 47) onwards, the *Revista de Saúde Pública* (Journal of Public Health), the support of the Science and Technology Department of the Ministry of Health (Decit – *Departamento de Ciência e Tecnologia do Ministério da Saúde*), is inaugurating a new section entitled Public Health Practice, which aims to highlight those articles in the issue which are especially relevant for, and have immediate application to, planning, implementing and evaluating health policies in Brazil.

Through this initiative, the journal seeks to contribute to the dissemination of scientific research findings, of strategic use to the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (Brazilian Unified Health System) In order to facilitate the use of these results by health care professionals and management, the articles will include reviews which highlight their potential applications.

To inaugurate this new section, we have highlighted four articles. One of these articles presents a proposal for creating an allocation factor for financial resources in health care, using neural networks and economic, demographic social and health indicators available in publicly accessible databases. This article presents the methodology and its application in the state of Pernambuco. The allocation factor is a tool which could be used by state or federal level managers in allocating resources so as to overcome health care inequalities. A second article deals with evaluating outpatients care for AIDS patients in Brazil, analyzing the evolution of available resources and the organization and management of outpatient units between 2001 and 2007. There were 504 units analyzed, across all of the states. Such an evaluation could prove useful to health care policy managers, indicating weak links which need more attention in the quest for better quality care. Another piece of research made use of the occurrence of congenital syphilis as a sentinel event in evaluating the quality of antenatal care in Rio de Janeiro. It contributes important elements to reflection on the quality of health care services, demonstrating that universal access alone does not guarantee the rights expressed in the Constitution if this is not accompanied by actions which impact positively on health care. The research demonstrates that, in spite of health care coverage and the mean number of appointments per woman having increased, the avoidable problem of congenital syphilis still occurs, something which can and should be prevented by antenatal care with a minimum standard of quality.

A fourth article analyzes the management of health care units, emphasizing management's training needs, a crucial topic in improving the health care system's performance.

Although these articles deal with different aspects, they are all relevant to health care policy and the Brazilian Unified Health System: methods of allocating financial resources, organization and resources in caring for AIDS patients, quality of antenatal care and training of health care unit managers.

Health care professionals and managers may find, in the results of these pieces of research, elements which can support a variety of activities, enabling them to include scientifically based data as a component in the decision making process.

Thus, with the creation of this new section, we hope to ally the editorial work of producing a scientific journal in the field of public health to the commitment of disseminating knowledge which can be effectively incorporated into public health policy actions, resulting in improvements to the health of the population.