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## Introduction

We are proud to present, in this supplement, articles on the AIDS epidemic in Brazil, written as a result of initiatives aimed at qualifying professionals for research, developed by the *Núcleo de Estudos para a Prevenção da Aids* – NEPAIDS (Center for Studies on AIDS Prevention).

NEPAIDS' commitment to provide courses on human resources qualification for AIDS research is thus established through initiatives that include health professionals, non-governmental organization (NGO) activists with little or no experience in research, and postgraduate students, considered to be beginners.

In Parker's words<sup>5</sup> (2002), these courses are innovative because:

*“One of the most remarkable characteristics of these experiments was precisely the care with which the coordinators described the detailed process involved in the qualification of young researchers and the production of knowledge, as these took shape and were molded in the period of development of this project. Whereas much of the “training” (at least in the AIDS field) has been limited to quick courses without an adequate follow-up or sequel after their conclusion, the model adopted by the works in this supplement, on the other hand, was extended throughout several stages, from the initial familiarization with the research and method theory to the project conception and its execution by means of several forms of partnership (among researchers and community activists, among more experienced investigators, or among senior and younger ones), including data gathering, analysis and the editorial process. This point was absolutely crucial – whereas few training programs seek to achieve the research process in a more extended manner, apart from the training and research proposal making, others follow the final stages when the data gathered are transformed into interpretations (encompassing analysis and publication), which is a more adequate form of sharing, that is, to socialize research results and disseminate them so that they can be known in public speech and thus discussed (whether by means of scientific meetings or other academic activities, or by more adequate means for public policy debate).”<sup>5</sup>*

The articles that comprise this supplement come from two activities developed by the NEPAIDS. The first one refers to the last course on AIDS Research Methodology that was given, a type of course developed by the NEPAIDS and presented in other publications.<sup>3-5</sup> In a little more than a decade, this Center held four courses with support from colleagues of institutions such as the *Faculdade de Medicina da USP* – FMUSP (School of Medicine at the University of São Paulo), the University of California in San Francisco – UCSF, the *Fundação Oswaldo Cruz* – Fiocruz (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation), the *Universidade de Brasília* – UnB (University of Brasília), and the *Universidade Federal da Bahia* (Federal University of Bahia). These initiatives were financed by different means, such as the *Programa Nacional de DST/AIDS do Ministério da Saúde* – PN-DST/Aids (STD/AIDS National Program of the Ministry of Health), the World AIDS Foundation and the Fogarty Foundation, besides the collaboration from the *Programa Municipal de DST/AIDS da cidade de São Paulo* (STD/AIDS Municipal Program of the city of São Paulo) for the execution of this last course.

Within a context of universal, free access to antiretroviral therapy, the Center has raised some questions: How are the life quality and work environment of people living with HIV/AIDS? Are there new stigmatizing process and discrimination forms that emerged from the antiretroviral therapy and, as a result, were added to the old forms? How is adherence to the therapeutic regimens by people living with HIV/AIDS?

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These first ten articles reflect these current issues of this Brazilian epidemic which have become even more complex after antiretroviral therapy introduction. One important characteristic of these articles is the sharing of authorship among health professionals, NGO activists and academic researchers. The articles portray a new array of issues of this Brazilian epidemic, drawing attention to vulnerable populations such as male and female drug users, tourists, homeless people, and health professionals in specialized services, who routinely deal with those afflicted with AIDS.

The last six articles originating from the second activity refer to a new type of qualification at NEPAIDS. In 2004, the Center was invited by the *PN-DST/Aids* and by UCSF's Professor Norman Hearst to participate in an initiative entitled "*Seminários sobre como Escrever Artigos Científicos para Revistas de Alto Impacto*" (Seminars on How to Write Scientific Articles for Relevant Journals). This partnership, established once again, enabled researchers from different institutions to come together: Aluisio Segurado, Heráclito Barbosa de Carvalho and Maria Inês Nemes from the School of Medicine at USP, Norman Hearst from UCSF, Francisco Inácio Bastos from *Fiocruz*, Edgar Merchan Hamann from UnB, Vera Paiva from the Institute of Psychology, and Cassia Buchalla and Ivan França Júnior from the Faculdade de Saúde Pública/USP.

Researchers from all Brazilian regions, who had carried out research financed by the *PN-DST/Aids* or by STD/AIDS state programs, but had not yet published their results, participated in the seminars. These seminars were fully financed by the *PN-DST/Aids*.

The participants, a group of 32 researchers, were divided into pairs for the 16 studies selected. Each pair was under the supervision of a senior researcher. There were five monthly meetings that lasted three to five days

each, where articles were written, section by section. The dynamics consisted of a class on the topic to be written about, supporting reading material, and pair review system utilization as pedagogical strategies. At each meeting, pairs received at least three opinions: one from a colleague, one from a senior researcher, and one given by someone on an ad hoc basis. These opinions were read and discussed at meetings that included three to four studies that took turns so as to provide more interaction among participants. In the final week, researchers from international universities (Columbia University, UCSF, and University of Pittsburgh from the US, and Universidad Caetano Heredia from Peru) participated in the pair review.

The pair review resource, when performed in an open, dialogue-based form, enables the most relevant characteristics in scientific communication by means of articles to be focused on: language precision, conciseness and clarity. In this type of educational meeting, as Brazilian educator Paulo Freire would say, all those who are pedagogically involved – participants, seniors and guests – become changed and enriched in the end.<sup>2</sup>

In this process, some of the articles produced were published on the relevant "AIDS" periodical, showing the research diversity concerning AIDS in this country.<sup>1</sup> The other articles produced in the seminars are published in this supplement and cover several themes. These studies were carried out in different regions of the country, such as the one on quick testing for injecting drug users in Rio de Janeiro and the one on prevention projects performed by sex professionals in the Amazon region, among others.

With these results obtained from the NEPAIDS' activities, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of this complex epidemic.

We hope you enjoy your reading.

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