

Collective Health on the move: the 12th Brazilian Congress of Collective Health (Abrascão 2018)

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These are troubled times in Brazil's history: political instability, legal uncertainty, economic crisis, a systematic assault on social and labor rights, public policies, and public universities, growing market privileges, and budget slashes (including in science and technology). The champions of this backward, nearsighted movement, which attempts to repeal the 1988 *Federal Constitution* and further oppress the underprivileged classes and social groups, are the same ones that have always opposed fairer income distribution and democratic progress in Brazil.

Hope and despair are socially produced in tandem. The predominant feeling among most Brazilian women and men is one of outrage, but such widespread dissatisfaction has been inconsequential so far, accompanied by indifference, passiveness, and distrust.

A gloomy context.

The current situation also results from the inability of many dissatisfied Brazilians to resist the conservative inroads. Brazil's crisis also stems from inadequate positions of the political parties and social movements that played a decisive role both in creating the Brazilian Unified National Health System (SUS) and in guaranteeing civil, social, and political rights. The powers-that-be certainly bear the primary blame for the country's crisis, but nobody is completely innocent. In order to rethink Brazil, we need to reflect on the organization and practices of the health reform movement, representative organizations, and social movements as a whole.

In recent years, the Brazilian Collective Health Association (Abrasco) has based its action on this understanding, seeking to radically democratize the Brazilian state and society, and thus our own association. Inspired by the expression that "Hope is in us... and in others", we say that resistance and social changes will depend on the people, on our capacity for activism and collaboration. Whatever the fate of the powers-that-be, no matter how serious the country's crisis, we must do our part to defend the SUS, our proposals, the right to health, and public university. This daunting challenge will also require renewing our political praxis, the way we deal with diversity and conflict.

We are organizing the 12th Brazilian Congress of Collective Health (Abrascão 2018) in this same spirit, under the aegis of inclusion and diversity, working to expand participation by members of the Thematic Groups (TGs), Committees, students, SUS workers, re-

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searchers, and social movements in setting the course for Abrasco and the organization of the Congress.

In Defense of the SUS, Social Rights, and Democracy is the motto chosen for the 12th Congress. These are essentially political themes. However, the Congress program will be broader, including debates on research output in all fields of health: arboviruses, primary care, violence, inequality, environment, cities, healthcare, etc. The Congress motto expresses a priority, a focus.

We are planning to have eight to ten thousand participants at the Congress.

The scientific papers submitted by researchers or groups are one of the basic thrusts of the Congress. The Scientific Committee has decided that all the papers will be presented orally and will be part of a round of debates. These discussion groups are being organized by thematic areas.

The round tables and lectures will provide another form of scientific and cultural exchange. This year we have invited members, groups, organizations, and movements to present proposals for themes and guest speakers. We have also issued a call for participation and received more than 300 proposals that the Scientific Committee has been selecting, based on such criteria as regional diversity, gender, ethnic, and generation equity, inclusion of diverse areas from Collective Health, Congress priorities, variety in the composition of speakers (round tables with scientists, social movements, activists, students, etc.). The Pre-Congress activities are being organized according to the same logic.

The Congress will also feature Big Debates, intended to address the major political and health problems, using dialogue to encourage the identification of strategies and approaches to overcome these problems.

The Congress also provides for a discussion on Collective Health's challenges, to encourage both reclaiming the field's history and thinking ahead. One challenge for Collective Health is the SUS, and another is to guarantee space for research, science and technology, and public policies. How do we deal with epidemics, how do we rethink contemporary sociability, income and power inequality, violence, assassinations, traffic accidents, and urban and environmental degradation? Beyond the SUS, we will focus on the specificity of Collective Health and the role of public health professionals.

The 12th Congress intends to impact public opinion in Brazil, publishing a final report on health, rights, and democracy following the event. The idea is to influence the political, ethical, and cultural debate that is tearing at the fabric of Brazilian society. The same also applies to Brazil's national elections in 2018. We will produce a summary of the Congress discussions for this purpose, publishing it as a Project – with an outline of analyses and guidelines on Brazil's future. This special edition is not intended to endorse specific candidates, since social movements should be independent of political parties, and we should not get lost in the division that is necessarily part of democracy. We will try to influence people to choose their candidates based on commitment to the SUS, democracy, gender rights, social inclusion, and diversity.

Even the choice of the Congress venue, on the campus of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) in the city of Rio de Janeiro, represents our outrage against the neglect towards social welfare and justice practiced by the current Administration. Holding the Congress at Fiocruz means to retrace and rethink the path from Public Health to Collective Health, emphasizing that public organizations are necessary and have the capacity to function effectively and efficiently. The Pre-Congress will be held at the State University of Rio de Ja-

neiro (UERJ), which has played a central role in building the field of Collective Health and serves as a symbol of public universities committed to society.

The Local Organizing Committee, consisting of students, professors, and staff from public universities in the state of Rio de Janeiro and from Fiocruz, workers in the SUS, and representatives of the area's social movements, have overcome financial difficulties to work creatively in organizing the Congress on the Fiocruz and UERJ campuses. Accessibility, a wide variety of spaces – tents, stands, rounds, where there will activities organized by grassroots movements, in addition to the official program –, transportation integrated with the subway system during the Congress, security, cultural performances; in a word, something for everybody.

It will be our Congress, and its success will depend on each and every one of the participants.