

EDITOR'S NOTE

Under the title “Ciência, Saúde e Poder na América Latina e no Caribe” (Science, Health, and Power in Latin America and the Caribbean), we are pleased to offer this supplement to volume 9 of *História, Ciências, Saúde—Manguinhos*, dedicated in its entirety to the history of health and medicine in this region of the world. This special issue comprises some of the best papers from the symposium on Science, Health, and Power in Latin America and the Caribbean, and from other important symposiums as well, part of the 12th International Congress of the History of Science, held in Mexico City in July 2001. All articles were subject to double-blind peer review and comments by guest editors, indispensable to ensuring the quality and impartiality of scientific periodicals.

The history of health and medicine is crucial not only to social history but also to public health in our region. Historical studies can help us establish identities and fashion a commitment to and understanding of the origin and evolution of current issues, as they can also serve to elucidate the complex processes of negotiation, fragmentation, and discontinuity generated within the arena of health and disease. This history can help us incorporate a long-term social perspective on the training and activities of health professionals, transcending traditional biomedical education and possibly offering suggestions on Latin America and the Caribbean's major challenges and on the area's outlook for collective health and social medicine. All aspects of Latin America's more recent health-care agenda should also be the object of historical analyses, focused especially on national health policies, campaigns to control and eradicate disease, the role of international and intergovernmental bodies, primary health care, health promotion, the so-called emergence and re-emergence of infecto-contagious diseases, and health sector reforms.

As an integral part of social history, the history of health affords a vital framework where we can endeavor to understand little-studied features of our countries, such as interactions between public health processes and social, cultural, economic, and political contexts; continuity and change in public health and the living conditions of urban and rural populations; relations between the State and the various social and ethnic groups active within the public health fields; and relations between health, disease, and the processes of state and nation building. A social history of health can shed light on relations between the State, health, and society in Latin America and the Caribbean so that comparisons can be made and similarities, differences, and unique features can be identified. It also lets us situate Latin America's historical experience within the international context and establish a more consistent dialog with the growing work in the social history of health and disease currently underway elsewhere around the globe. The history of health provides a critical perspective for new areas of interest in history and the social sciences, such as gender, race, and nationalism; tensions between curative practices and social discourses; the legacies of post-colonial societies; the experiences of illness and death; popular perceptions of science and nature; processes of professionalization; and the interaction between natural history, on the one hand, and the social construction of disease and biomedical knowledge, medicine, and aspects of society's material life, on the other.

The symposium was stage for presentation of a series of original papers on the social history of health, medicine, and the biomedical sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean. The studies compiled in this issue show us how each local context displays its own unique

characteristics and further suggest that general trends are to be found throughout the region. We would like to underscore two elements shared by symposium papers: their wealth of ideas, practices, and health programs, alongside their complex interaction with social, cultural, and political processes. Our readers will be able to make their own assessments of what we feel is a fine sampling that illustrates how in recent years the histories of health, disease, and medicine have grown as fields of study within our region. This growth has not only been quantitative — with more and more papers given at scientific meetings and ever greater numbers of books, book chapters, and periodical articles being published — but also qualitative, reflecting a thematic, methodological, and conceptual diversity of both regional and national scope.

This issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde—Manguinhos* is also the product of a joint effort by a group of professionals devoted to research and to producing new knowledge and information in the social history of health, medicine, and the biomedical sciences — a group that has been acting to build a public-health history network in Latin America and the Caribbean, called Rede Hispalc (Rede de História da Saúde Pública na América Latina e no Caribe). The network's origins can be traced to sessions organized at such international events as the Latin American Society for the History of Science and Technology conference, which last took place in Rio de Janeiro in July 1998; the meeting of the International Network for the History of Public Health, held in Almuñecar, Spain, in September 1999; the Latin American Studies Association conference in Washington, D.C., in September 2001; and a first organizational meeting of the network itself, held in Bogotá in June 1999. The goals of Hispalc — by definition open and non-hierarchical — are to broaden communication between professionals working with this topic so that experiences, techniques, and results can be shared; to promote comparative studies; and to organize meetings, discussion forums, databases, biographies, publications, exhibits, and other academic activities. In the past five years, we have watched and participated in the formation of a community of researchers of different nationalities interested in many historical aspects of health and disease. These individuals have been communicating via internet, gathering together in different forums around Latin America, the Caribbean, the US, Europe, and other spots, and taking part in publishing initiatives.

Published here in their original languages, these articles form a complex panorama (most times tragic, and often even heroic) of the experiences of birth, life, illness, healing, and death on our continent. The articles by Marcos Cueto and Maria Cristina da Costa Marques allow the reader to understand and compare quite contemporary histories within two national contexts: the histories of the AIDS epidemic in Peru and in Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s and how society, the medical and scientific communities, and governments have responded to this challenge. Both articles incite us to ponder how we should approach a history of the present time. Ana Maria Carrillo and Germán Yépez Colmenares examine the complex dynamics behind public health activities in Mexico between 1876 and 1910 and in Caracas in the 1870s, respectively. Ana Maria analyzes the main constituent elements of the birth of what she considers modern public health under Porfirio Díaz, linking it to Mexico's rising participation in the process of capitalist development. In similar fashion, Germán Yépez describes the Venezuelan government's medical and public health efforts aimed at transforming the nation's capital into a modern city, clean and free of epidemics, and at bringing it into the international economic circuit — efforts similar to those occurring in other Latin American capitals and ports. Sandra Caponi's article, more a history of biomedical knowledge, analyzes and compares how Argentinean and Brazilian researchers designed their tropical disease agendas during the

late 19th and early 20th centuries. Her goal is to understand why these scientists, who were the direct heirs of one and the same Pasteurian research program, came up with distinct agendas.

Little explored by Brazilian historiography, medical education in Brazil is the topic of Márcia Regina Barros da Silva's article, which analyzes the debates surrounding creation of medical schools in São Paulo. The author shows how these debates were in fact related to the formation of a more homogenous professional group, which deemed itself hierarchically superior to other professions in the health field and was interested in linking research and teaching in medical education. Highlighting the struggle against prostitution and alcoholism, Diana Obregón paints a broad canvas of the fight against venereal diseases, especially syphilis, as waged by the Colombian government and physicians in the 1886-1951 period. The author uses the realm of venereal disease to explore scientific knowledge, professional interests, national identity, State policies, morality, and social control at a point of intersection. Diego Armus, drawing relations between disease, gender, and urban culture, analyzes the interplay of tuberculosis and the female gender's chances for social mobility from the perspective of tango lyrics. These tragic narratives tell the life stories of women who left poor outlying neighborhoods for downtown Buenos Aires in the hope of achieving social ascent only to be struck down by the disease. These songs stand as a metaphor of the feminization of tuberculosis in Buenos Aires during the first three decades of the 20th century. In a look at Argentina's history of social protection during the first half of the 20th century, Maria Silvia Di Liscia reveals the face of social assistance as seen by women and young children during 1935-1948. The author analyzes the construction and dissemination of discourses on maternity and birthrates in different social spheres and examines the institutions and social practices developed as part of the State's attempt to decrease infant mortality and boost the birthrate.

Our Images department offers a selection of photographs portraying anti-malaria measures and campaigns. Published in these pages for the first time, the pictures, which belong to three Casa de Oswaldo Cruz collections, can be considered prime illustrations of crucial moments in the 20th-century history of such campaigns in Brazil. Gilberto Hochman, Maria Teresa Mello, and Paulo Elian explore connections between each collection's images and the knowledge, practices, and techniques used to fight malaria. In the Sources department, Maria Rachel Fróes da Fonseca provides the reader with a valuable guide to sources and bibliography on Brazil's history of health, medicine, and biomedical sciences from 1808 through 1930.

Lastly, we would like to thank all our colleagues and friends (most especially Emílio Quevedo) who responded to our call for papers from the Mexico symposium — which formed the raw material for this special issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos* — and who have helped foster academic and professional exchange in the history of health within Latin America and the Caribbean. Our gratitude to all — and until we meet again.

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