

Dialogues for a more collective scientific practice

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“From the perspective of Public Health, how can we contribute to practices and ways of communicating and evaluating scientific production that enable a more plural, inclusive, and integrative dialogue?”. This was the question raised by Viviana Martinovich, Executive Editor of the journal *Salud Colectiva* (Argentina), to initiate the roundtable with editors of scientific journal, during the 13th Brazilian Congress on Public Health of the Brazilian Public Health Association (Abrasco). The question leads us to reflect on four interrelated themes and processes, with significant implications and challenges for scientific journals: production of knowledge, democratization of science, scientific dissemination, and evaluation of scientific production.

Knowledge production involves the ability to answer the social needs arising from current world changes. These transformations range from demographic and epidemiological to technological and informational changes, related to their use at work, research, teaching, health care, and communication and information strategies. Moreover, they address the climatic and environmental phenomena caused by human activity on the planet’s ecosystems, leading to degradation and increasing risks in urban and rural spaces. Changes in production structures – with flexibility, informality, and precariousness of labor law – are fundamental determinants of these processes and involve the concentration of wealth, the financialization of the economy, and the emergence of new groups and private interests that exert influence upon health services. The effect of these transformations on the worsening of social inequalities is evident – differences in class, gender, race, ethnicity, housing, and accessibility – further worsening living and health conditions.

The changes unevenly affect countries, populations, and health systems and services, leading to instability and recurrent and multi-dimensional crises. The context reinforces the significance of radicalizing the critical and multidisciplinary perspective that is at the very origin of the field of Public Health ¹. Understanding complex phenomena, such as those that occur in health, requires collaborative efforts and articulation of different knowledge and perspectives, which permeate the areas and subareas of the field and should be expressed in scientific research and publications. In this sense, we highlight the importance of opening spaces in journals to encourage dialogue and diversity of approaches and

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themes, and that contribute effectively to the formulation and implementation of public policies and actions.

In the democratization of the science process, we highlight the need for the open sharing of knowledge. Open Science is a current global movement that aims to make research accessible, by eliminating editorial, legal, and economic obstacles, toward a free movement and use of scientific knowledge ^{2,3}. The implications for scientific journals ⁴ involve changes in editorial procedures, including: ensuring the free availability of scientific digital content to any user; the evaluation by manuscript journals made available on preprints servers; sharing of data, codes, methods, and other materials used in published research; and the opening of information regarding the peer review process.

The challenges in this area are enormous. Nevertheless, changes are already underway, partly due to the encouragement of funding agencies. There are barriers due to the configuration and influence of large oligopolies that dominate the world market of scientific publication ⁵. Article publication rates often deepen inequalities among scientists in developed and developing countries in sharing scientific advances. Thus, it is necessary that the movement in favor of Open Science involves academic cooperation strategies and new publication models that promote equal opportunities for researchers worldwide. Additionally, there are cultural obstacles related to the needs of greater investments in technologies and professional qualification for adopting of open practices by scientific journals of Public Health.

Scientific dissemination is another theme of extreme relevance, which is expressed both as a field of knowledge and an action strategy ⁶. Its objectives are to broaden the debate and combat anti-science; to make scientific knowledge more accessible and, consequently, more democratic to a wider public; and to strengthen the links between science and the public since it allows people to be included in the debates regarding specialized topics that directly affect the population.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participation of scientists in the dissemination increased, whereas the scientific articles did not. There is a great gap between the forms of communication adopted by scientists and the public outside the academia, who do not speak the same language, nor do they use the same formats and strategies for sharing or using the knowledge from research outcomes. Similarly, it is difficult to turn an article into promotional material. These aspects require greater participation from editors, researchers, communicators, and authors to select evidence with the most significant potential for applicability, and to develop more effective communication strategies and instruments in science. Efforts are needed to allow these research results to reach the targeted public better, increasing the chances of incorporating scientific evidence when dealing with Public Health issues.

Finally, the fourth theme refers to the evaluation processes of scientific production. We know that interests of different groups permeate the evaluation of science and that there is still an overuse of bibliometric indicators to evaluate the quality of scientific production. In an article published by Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) journals ⁷, we highlighted the various problems related to the use of an impact factor for this purpose: prioritization of topics of interest to scientific policy in countries in the Northern hemisphere (the United States and the United Kingdom, mainly); adjustment of content published by scientific journals from non-hegemonic countries; and extreme appreciation of publications in English, which removes science from non-specialized readers and hinders the important role of journals in providing information for training at the various levels required by society and health systems.

In Brazil, the amount of publication is still more valued the quality, originality, and potential impact of research outcomes, despite the significance of Public Health in the face of current challenges. In graduate studies, incentives for financing publications in foreign journals persist. Notably, as long as there are no more substantive changes in the criteria for the evaluation of science, further advances in the sense of democratization and effectiveness in the use of scientific knowledge are compromised.

How has CSP acted in the face of these different processes?

CSP stands out as a representative journal of the Public Health field in both international and national scenarios. We preserve the comprehensive character and diversity of themes in publications, incorporating the approaches and methods of current research⁸, and indicating areas that deserve greater prominence in the scientific production of health. We also seek to stimulate the publication of topics relevant to Public Health, via different journal sections (particularly in the Debate, Thematic Section, and Perspectives), without losing sight of the originality and quality of the published articles.

Likewise, we maintain and value the publication of articles in Portuguese and Spanish, seeking a greater scope and applicability of publications in Latin-speaking countries. CSP is a reference and has an essential role in Latin America and should continue to foster scientific dialogue between the region's countries.

In 2023, CSP will have Amazon as the theme for the cover photos. Climate concerns and the environmental agenda are among the world's main problems. We consider it necessary to resume the role of South American countries in rethinking the Amazon, no longer as a place for mining and the expansion of agribusiness but as a world heritage site. This debate is part of the commitment of Public Health, and CSP aims to promote and expand this dialogue with the academia and society. Themes, such as environmental imbalances caused by deforestation and climate change and the risks to human health, Indigenous peoples, the ribeirinho population, as well as spatial mobility of the population, living conditions, land use, security, among others, will be contemplated over the next year.

We have also been involved in the debates of Open Science, promoted by the SciELO collection, the scientific editors forums of Abrasco, Fiocruz, and other scientific institutions that seek to incorporate new practices for the open sharing of knowledge produced in Public Health; thus contributing to a more transparent and accessible science to all. In times of threatened democracy, movements that aim to guarantee access to materials, data, codes freely, and academic content for the whole society, allow for more collaborative scientific practices engaged with social reality.

Scientific dissemination has been a priority. We started using Facebook and Twitter in 2017-2018 in a less professional way. We have a scientific journalist and have adopted specific routines for the different fronts of action: social networks; press office; interviews with authors (videos for YouTube and audios in the form of podcasts)⁹. We intend to advance even further, promoting greater involvement of authors and their institutions and deepening the evaluation of the journal's efforts and investments in scientific dissemination.

Finally, we reinforce our commitment to the debate on the evaluation of scientific production, according to international principles and guidelines on the subject^{10,11}, which reinforce the importance of qualitative evaluation, and of a sovereign science, committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Values that sustain and enrich democracy and science!

Contributors

L. D. Lima contributed to the writing and revision and approved the final version. M. S. Carvalho contributed to the writing and revision and approved the final version. L. C. Alves contributed to the writing and revision and approved the final version.

Additional information

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