

This first issue of *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* of 2006 brings some news, the emergence of new possibilities of investigations and practices in a field in need of theoretical depth. Taking the discourse around the human mouth as an object of analysis, this edition seeks to organize the knowledge produced at universities and research institutes in an area still striving for insertion in the field of theoretical production in Collective Health.

It is in this sense of creating a connection, an identification with an already well succeeded field that Collective Buccal Health is exceeding the traditional formulations of “dental health” strongly marked by a preventive approach. In a similar way, the epidemiological studies, for decades mainly focused on the prevalence and incidence of tooth decay, are only now reaching beyond their immediate significance, to find in the same indicators evidence articulating buccal disease with social and living conditions. The social determination we are so much talking about took a long time to find its “natural” course in the form of socially oriented research, in which human sciences appear not as “externality” but as a structuring axis from which a fertile dialogue with biological sciences can be derived, with or without recurring to mathematics.

Collective Buccal Health appears thus renewed among the multiple subjects that constitute health practices, including research. The term, some have considered improper, has however a proper subject. Since having been proposed in 1988, the term “collective buccal health” was used in substitution to integral or simplified dentistry, in the course of the same movement that led to the substitution of the terms “social”, “community” or “whole medicine” by “collective health”. It became widely used in the 90s, to the point of substituting earlier denominations used in University Departments and professional associations. However, as the reader will observe in the debates on the “buccality”, central expression around which this issue was organized, this does not mean that the name necessarily walks *pari passu* with what it intends to express.

If, in the last years, we witnessed an expressive theoretical development of this specific “area” in books, papers, dissertations and theses all over the country, we could also observe an expressive increase of practices, including the reformulation of health services and the development of new technologies. Another noteworthy achievement are the regular scientific meetings, above all the National Meeting of Administrators and Technicians of Public Dentistry Services, already going towards its 19<sup>th</sup> edition, regional and state meetings and the conferences on buccal health, and finally the presence of the Brazilian Association of Collective Buccal Health.

It was in this context we accepted the challenge of organizing this issue, on invitation of the Scientific Publisher, Cecília Minayo, to whom we publicly wish to express our admiration and gratefulness. We also would like to express our sincere thanks to the collaborators of this edition, the authors of articles and discussions. Finally, let us say that organizing this edition was an arduous but pleasant task for us and, as it always should be, a source of new knowledge and understanding between us and all those who participated in this collective achievement

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