

Violence in today's society and its repercussions on collective health

In 1994, when the Pan American Health Organization for the first time gathered ministers, experts and professionals from the Americas for discussing the question of social violence affecting the quality of life, the *Cardernos de Saúde Pública* published a thematic number, organized by researchers of the Centro Latino Americano de Estudos sobre Violência e Saúde-CLAVES/Fiocruz, entitled: *The impact of violence on health*. This number (vol. 10, supl. 1, 1994) was presented at the Washington meeting, at the same time it was published in Brazil.

In 1999, also under coordination of researchers of the CLAVES, the journal *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* published another thematic number (vol. 4, n. 1): *Can violence be prevented?*

The present thematic number, an initiative of the same group, is dedicated to reflections on the problem coming from different countries, to be presented on occasion of the 11th World Congress on Public Health, to take place August 24-27, 2006, in Rio de Janeiro.

Its contents offer readers a deep and wide-ranging view of the phenomenon, based on the historical moment and on social and structural determiners, some of them structuring the human condition and human relations. The text written by Michel Wieviorka, social scientist, director of the École de Hautes Études de Sciences Sociales in Paris, opens the debate, followed by contributions of important Brazilian social scientists, delving deeply into the issue. The journal counts on contributions of eminent researchers like Vamik D. Volkan, professor of the University of Virginia and indicated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Another article of this journal was prepared by Duncan Pedersen, physician and epidemiologist of the McGill University in Montreal, Canada, about the consequences of political violence for the mental health of the population.

Two texts emphasize the vision of the United Nations System with respect to violence. Etienne Krug and Linda Dahlberg (WHO) introduce violence as a worldwide health problem, and the social scientist Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro presents steps already taken for getting informed about the situation of violence against children in the world and potential forms of prevention.

The Latin American context is approached in the writing of Roberto Briceño-León about Venezuela; in the article of the sanitarian Saul Franco and his group about Colombia; in a text of the group led by Hugo Spinelli on external causes in Argentina, and by Miguel Malo and Alberto Concha, representatives of PAHO in Washington and in Brazil respectively, proposing prevention policies against violence.

The situation in Brazil is approached in epidemiological analyses of accidents and violence; in texts analyzing the formulation, trajectory, legitimization and implementation of the National Policy for Reduction of Accidents and Violence, published by the Ministry of Health in 2001. Other articles present a variety of initiatives focused on accidents and violence, tracing this definition throughout the entire environment of the Unified Health System.

The purpose of this thematic number is to contribute, together with society and health professionals, to the construction of thoughts and practices in favor of citizenship, social inclusion and promotion of life, antidotes to violence.

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