

The promising expansion of the use of the gender category in the Brazilian Health System

This thematic issue about gender and health fulfills a double mission: to highlight the importance of gender as an analytical category in Brazilian public health, and to point out the process of production of new themes, objects, and categories which characterize it, conferring a peculiar vigor and dynamism.

Meanwhile in the interdisciplinary areas of knowledge production, social practices and meanings, Brazilian public health has shown itself to be receptive to the challenge of, continually, questioning itself about the ways the subjects and social groups travel the road between birth and death. As a field of political action, marked by a commitment to social demands, it has also been open to experimenting with interventions which could transform this path into one as long, productive, and enjoyable as possible. In the center of both of these challenges lies the subject, sexualized, and identified with one or another gender through complex negotiations among experiences, emotions and cultural attributes related to its sex.

We begin from the premise that health actions, being directed to subjects and social groups, should incorporate the idea that the human being, the subjective constitution of the sexualizing process, does not exist outside of gender traumas, an organizing axis of culture. However, given the relationship of the origin of public health with the wisdom of biomedicine, that operates on *the body*, many times the subjective dimension and the singular way in which each one performs were negated or abstracted. In this way, the crossing of gender into the subject's constitution is rendered invisible in the area. At the same time, as gender studies were born related to the feminist struggle for women's rights, during a certain period there was a certain impermeability and this category was used for something somewhat beyond the limits of its birthplace.

Fortunately, the commitment to understand and act in an emancipatory sense in the world, which is as typical to public health as it is to gender studies, contributes to the initial distance being overcome. From the first studies about women and reproduction, moving to research about AIDS, sexuality, masculinity, and gender positions that accompany violent acts, the use of the gender category, articulated through so many social indicators, has shown itself to be fundamental for the understanding of facts and human tasks and, consequently, the processes of health and sickness.

The group of articles chosen by GT Gender and Health of ABRASCO in this thematic issue, then, reveals the amplitude of issues that are becoming introduced into the field of public health, not for being centered only on bodies and diseases, but also around subjects and life trajectories, and enriching itself under the lens of gender analysis.

On carrying out its dual mission, the present model intends to also serve as an invitation for other researchers and professionals to incorporate public health themes, from the angle of gender, into their academic production and social interventions. To sum up, we crave that gender coverage serve as a cross-sectional axis in public health, contributing to the increase in this already fertile area, as well as to the category's epidemiological robustness.

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Guest editors