

The field of Feeding and Nutrition in Collective Health: identifying outlines and projecting paths

In July 2008, it was established in Brasília (Brazil), the Working Group on Food and Nutrition in Collective Health (FNCH), which became part of the Brazilian Association of Collective Health (Abrasco) with the support of the General Coordination of the Food and Nutrition Politics of the Ministry of Health. In the occasion of its foundation, a mission was agreed upon to contribute to the construction of references that could better locate and support interdisciplinary activities in FNCH. For this purpose, a first challenge was to reflect on Food and Nutrition as a field of knowledge generation, knowledge and practices in its relations with Collective Health in Brazil.

In meetings that followed this inaugural mark, one of the products outlined was a publication focusing the delineation of where Food and Nutrition is involved with the Collective Health, both designed as fields of knowledge and specific practice. It was therefore posed the complex, yet necessary, task of visiting the camp in its present conformation on one hand, visiting the field in its present conformation, and on the other, rethinking it through new lenses and approaches as to identify the scope of what has been calling Food and Nutrition in Collective Health.

These questions could be answered in different ways and by distinct paths. One of them – and this was the guiding theme of the construction of this thematic issue – is to (re)visit both areas seeking to identify in their interfaces what is effectively constituting investment objects in the theoretical and empirical levels.

Such movement, as stated in the “Debate” paper which opens this issue, was conducted by the identification of the “core knowledge” that constitute the Collective Health, conceived as an already consolidated field, formed by three main cores: Epidemiology; (a segment of) the Humanities and Social Sciences transiting this area, and a third domain, Policy, Planning and Health Management. What objects and discourses have been constructed (and advertised) when the three cores dialogue with objects of Food and Nutrition, the latter also designed as an interdisciplinary field?

It is within this complexity that fits the design of this special issue, built by members of the above mentioned Working Group, which have joined the efforts of many other researchers. This proposal reveals to be both timely and highly relevant, considering there is very few literature on the subjected focused and the incipient epistemological debate that this special issue seeks to discuss. It is associated with the social-sanitary of Brazil, in which food and nutritional issues has become more relevant as a matter of Collective Health. Hence the interests in advancing the understanding of the conceptual problems and potentialities that exist in this articulation.

Based on the exposed, it was included in this issue products that highlight the outcomes of what we consider a “cross-fertilization” between the two fields examined, at the time that are changes, potentialities and expansion of borders, toward the deconstruction of disciplinary boundaries, revealing emergent objects according to the challenges that the current social-sanitary health scenario calls us to overcome. This is an initial effort that we hope, it will stimulate many other investments in that direction.

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Guest editors