

Contemporary transformations, social inequalities, and health

The far-reaching contemporary social transformations are reflected in various fields and dimensions, unequally affecting countries, populations, health systems and services. To a certain extent, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted ongoing trends, affecting historically vulnerable and excluded groups more intensely, due to differences in class, gender, race, ethnicity, and accessibility conditions. This population lives in underprivileged areas, on the streets and/or in precarious housing. In this scenario, the agenda of promoting and valuing diversity and equity is gaining prominence. From the point of view of the sciences, the complexity of these phenomena reinforces the need to broaden the dialog between branches of knowledge, from a critical, systemic, and interdisciplinary perspective¹.

This issue brings together articles that elicit reflection on these transformations and their implications for public health, based on different approaches and focuses, from six thematic standpoints.

The first standpoint addresses the deteriorating social and health inequalities. Democratic values and solidarity are highlighted from a global perspective to direct political action to guarantee rights, which conform to universal public systems. In Brazil, there is also the added urgency of measures to tackle structural racism.

The second brings together papers on the challenges facing public health systems and the Unified Health System (SUS). Once again, inequalities and vulnerabilities are highlighted, both in terms of access, performance, and the ability of health services to respond to health emergencies. More specifically, the role of primary health care is analyzed in different contexts, as well as the obstacles to be found in Brazil due to its greater dependence on the allocation of resources from parliamentary amendments.

The third category encompasses papers focusing on health care. Some studies stress the importance of the intersectional perspective for both care and vigilance of the population, as well as intersectoral and comprehensive practices aimed at the homeless population. As an analytical category, intersectionality makes it possible to understand that power relations based on social markers such as race, class and gender affect social groups differently in all aspects of coexistence in society². Other articles draw attention to the restructuring of care based on the lessons of the pandemic and the importance of care for the final stages of life.

The fourth focuses on the various types of violence and their interfaces with health. These can be observed in different social groups in specific contexts, among which the following stand out: women and people with disabilities in rural areas; interpersonal violence among trans and cisgender women; and women at imminent risk of death from intimate partner violence living in shelters. Violence against children and adolescents is discussed at length, either in terms of the factors associated with its recurrence; to the connection between bullying, childhood adversity and social capital; to institutional foster care as a protective measure; or to the multidimensional analysis of the social network of families in which neglect is present. Lastly, the effects of armed violence on health, in daily life and in the coping strategies adopted by health and education professionals, are addressed.

The fifth outlook focuses on new preventive and therapeutic technologies. These include studies focusing on educational actions and care for adverse events, the regulation of technologies in health emergencies, social participation in Anvisa's regulations and the challenges facing telehealth care in the SUS.

The sixth and final viewpoint examines changes in terms of the climate and the environment. In this respect, it acknowledges the importance of an ethical and political stance in nutrition to deal with environmental emergencies. Socio-environmental injustice, associated with job insecurity and gender and racial inequalities, is also a topic analyzed.

Good reading!

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