

## Triennial evaluation of graduate studies programs in Public Health in Brazil <sup>1</sup>

Public Health has become a fully consolidated field in Brazil, according to a recent evaluation of graduate studies programs by CAPES (the National Coordinating Body for Training University-Level Personnel), covering 2001-2003. The report highlights not only the field's consolidation, but also its sustained expansion. In addition to the increasing number of graduate studies programs, the evaluation demonstrates how these programs have implemented the underlying principles of science and technology, systematized in the process established by CAPES for improving the Brazilian graduate studies system as a whole.

The higher scores received by several programs and the sustained scores of other programs express the relevance and growth of Public Health research in Brazil, particularly in the last decade. The number of research groups in this field has grown rapidly, reflecting the numerical increase in scientific output (articles, books, theses, and dissertations). The demand for scientific debate has also expanded rapidly, and it is no coincidence that attendance at the successive scientific conferences in Public Health has repeatedly surprised the organizers, who struggle to predict and respond to such exponential growth.

In relation to intellectual output, there is clear evidence of the enhanced theoretical and methodological quality of Brazilian research and the expanded participation by Brazilian scientific output in the international Public Health research scenario. A recent survey of Brazilian researchers in Public Health who hold CNPq (National Research Council) research productivity grants showed intense research activity (*Cad Saúde Pública* 2003; 19:1863-76). During the period 2000-2002, a total of 1,124 articles were published in scientific journals, distributed among 321 journal titles (68% of which have acknowledged international circulation). Approximately 25% of the studies were published in two highly prestigious Brazilian journals with international circulation: *Cadernos de Saúde Pública/Reports in Public Health* and *Revista de Saúde Pública*. CSP and RSP occupy an outstanding position in all the categories of researchers with CNPq grants, and especially those in class I.

Both CSP and RSP are published by national institutions with extensive scientific recognition both in Brazil and abroad (the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation and the University of São Paulo, respectively). Together with other Brazilian periodicals, the two journals now form one of the main bridges between the academic and scientific communities and health services; they meet one of the prime objectives of Public Health research, which is to develop new alternatives for disease prevention, health promotion, and the organization of an equitable health system.

The influence of the Brazilian Public Health field can be measured by its growing presence in the international scenario, particularly in Latin America. In Brazil, in addition to the major contribution of our programs to the production of scientific knowledge, the field's researchers participate in technical committees in charge of defining quality standards and control strategies for relevant health problems, as well as in the organization of health services. Professional Master's programs have recently been created that aim at the production of operational health research, linked to graduate-level qualification of managers from different levels of the Unified National Health System (SUS).

This stimulating scenario shows the high degree of commitment by the graduate studies programs to social, institutional, and market needs, together with the on-going improvement of standards. The challenges are numerous: identification of the field's composition, expansion of scientific activities, increased national and international exchange (the resources for which have been insufficient), and a more even distribution of research around the various regions of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the document by the Committee on Public Health, CAPES, Brasília, 2004.