

## Evaluation of graduate studies in Brazil and its impact on national scientific journals: an alert!

This issue of *Cadernos de Saúde Pública/Reports in Public Health* features the publication of a highly significant document (see p. 2720) – the official position paper by the Brazilian Forum of Graduate Studies Coordinators in Public Health on the new system for classifying scientific periodicals for purposes of graduate studies evaluation implemented by CAPES (the Division on Graduate Studies of the Ministry of Education). Brazilian Public Health considers the document so important that the full text is being published simultaneously in the field's main journals.

Since the 1970s, CAPES has systematically evaluated Brazilian graduate studies programs. There is widespread recognition that the continuity and seriousness of this evaluation process have consistently fostered the improvement of graduate studies in the country. It would be no exaggeration to state that the graduate studies system is one of Brazil's most extensively evaluated policy areas. In addition to helping train new generations of graduate-level personnel, evaluation has also made an important qualitative and quantitative contribution to academic output, in the form of scientific articles, chapters, and books. A key component of this system is "Qualis Periodicals", which can be described simply as a ranking of scientific journals based on traditional bibliometric indicators.

The Public Health field is an excellent example of the spectacular evolution of graduate studies in Brazil. In particular, over the course of the last decade, new Master's and PhD courses have flourished in various regions of the country (notwithstanding persistent gaps, especially in the Midwest and North), and there has been outstanding growth in academic output, along with the consolidation of important scientific journals. The space in this editorial is limited, but two such journals deserve special mention, *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* and *Revista de Saúde Pública*, indexed in the most important international bibliographic databases. The two are also among the journals with the best indicators of database use, as in the case of SciELO. The two periodicals are widely acknowledged by the field's research community, publishing some 20% of its academic output, even while approving just 15-20% of the papers submitted to them, thus demonstrating their selectiveness. We should also highlight that in addition to these two journals there are others in the Brazilian Public Health field like *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, *Revista Brasileira de Epidemiologia*, and *Physis* that are more recent but which have also shown excellent results.

The position of the Coordinators' Forum published in this issue calls attention to the potential harmful effects that the new Qualis Periodicals criteria proposed by CAPES could have on the publishing of scientific journals in Brazil, especially in Public Health. With one fell swoop, as compared to the previous evaluation (2004-2006), several important national journals in the Qualis system were demoted on the basis of arbitrary criteria. The arguments are laid out quite clearly in the document, but it is important to reiterate that these new criteria, applied indiscriminately and without considering the specificities of the research areas, can do more to reverse important strides and triumphs achieved in recent decades than to strengthen new horizons.

In the case of Public Health, the hope is that the parties in charge of evaluating graduate studies will take a more careful look at the adverse impacts of the new procedures, and perhaps correct them. There is no lack of solid reasons to do so!

*Maria do Carmo Leal*

Vice-Presidente de Ensino, Informação e Comunicação,  
Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.  
duca@fiocruz.br

*Carlos E. A. Coimbra Jr.*

Editor  
coimbra@ensp.fiocruz.br