

ABRASCO: 30 years of science, education, and practice with a social commitment

The incoming board of directors of the Brazilian Association of Graduate Studies in Public Health (ABRASCO) was elected for the 2009-2012 term (<http://www.abrasco.com.br>) during the 9th Brazilian Congress of Public Health, held in Recife in 2009, which coincided with the association's 30th anniversary and reflected the scale of the challenges foreseen for this next triennium.

Scientific vigor and the capacity to attract key social players have characterized ABRASCO's role in the impressive strides made by the Unified National Health System (SUS). This feat is celebrated even as the National Health System has come under threat in various areas. Under-financing and inefficiencies reduce the system's impact on the Brazilian population's health conditions and quality of life. Improvement in health quality requires not only more funding for present and future demands, but also well-directed spending. The system's financing should prioritize primary health care, prevention, and health promotion. The historical tenfold disadvantage of minimum budget financing for primary health care in comparison to the per capita funding for medium and high-complexity care characterizes the National Health System as a "poor system for the poor", especially in primary care.

The rapid expansion of Graduate Courses in Public Health and the creation of Undergraduate Courses have broadened ABRASCO's interface with faculty, researchers, staff, and students. During the next three years, ABRASCO will defend a stronger link between scientific output, education, and social practices. A greater role for research both in teaching and political, professional, and scientific decision-making will spawn a quality leap for the public health field.

In addition to helping publicize the impressive output by academia and health services in Brazil, ABRASCO intends to increase its members' participation in the association's events and activities. Efforts will also focus on expanding international relations, particularly with Latin America as a whole and Mercosur in particular, Portuguese-speaking African countries, Europe, and the United States.

Representing the scientific community in the National Health Council, ABRASCO will defend increases in financing for professional and academic training and research in public health. The push for institutionalized evaluation of products, processes, structures, and policies targeting the population's health conditions will be facilitated by greater exchange with National Health System's administrators, health workers, users, and service providers. Science, Technology, and Innovation, essential for guaranteeing the right to high-quality health, require better coordination of efforts. The Brazilian elections in 2010 will foster partnership with scientific and civil society organizations in elaborating a plan to ensure the candidates' commitment to strengthening and improving the National Health System and public health.

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