

Planning the *National Health Survey* in Brazil

Population health surveys have been used increasingly to obtain information on self-reported morbidity and health lifestyles, as well as to evaluate health system performance.

In developed countries, population-based surveys have been used since the 1960s, while in developing countries such studies have only been implemented more recently. In Brazil, the Ministry of Health has made substantial investments in the area, funding the Health Supplement of the *National Household Sample Survey* (PNAD; 1998, 2003, and 2008) and conducting sample surveys on chronic diseases and behavioral factors in the State capitals and in the Federal District.

The process of developing a *National Health Survey* with a nationwide scope and defined periodicity began in 2003, led by the Thematic Committee on Population-Based Information under the Inter-Agency Network for Health Information (RIPSA), and was reinvigorated in 2007 at a seminar by ABRASCO on surveys, which recommended establishing an executive working group for the planning. In the year 2009, a ruling was passed naming a Management Committee for preparing guidelines to conduct the *National Health Survey*. Invited to participate in the Management Committee as representatives of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, we are currently coordinating a scientific group that develops all stages of the survey's planning before its application in 2012.

The *National Health Survey* will be a nationwide household survey to be conducted in partnership with the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). It will be part of the IBGE Integrated System of Household Surveys and is scheduled to be performed every 5 years. The survey will consist of a household interview that will be based on the Health Supplement of the PNAD, plus an individual interview with a focus on morbidity and lifestyles, to be answered by a household resident 14 years or older, selected with equal probability among all the eligible residents. For this selected individual, measures of height, weight, waist circumference, and blood pressure, besides a blood sample for lab tests will be collected.

The sampling plan will be designed jointly with the IBGE, considering estimation of some target parameters at different levels of geographic aggregation. An oversample of elderly subjects (60 years and older) will be performed. IBGE will be in charge of the sampling and fieldwork, including the pilot study, while the Ministry of Health will be responsible for the anthropometric measures and blood samples.

In the current planning phase of the *National Health Survey*, a questionnaire is being prepared based on national and international experience with health surveys and the results of a consultation with researchers and representatives from the technical areas of the Ministry of Health.

It is our understanding that the development of this process is not only a major opportunity for progress in collecting essential information for policymaking in the area of health promotion, surveillance, and healthcare, but also in establishing an effective work partnership among the academic community, technical departments of the Ministry of Health, and IBGE. In this context, we take great pleasure in announcing, through this Editorial, the launching of a website, <http://www.pns.icict.fiocruz.br>, to stimulate the debate on the survey and to encourage broad participation in its planning.

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