Abstract
This paper wishes to contribute to the debate around citizen participation in health system decision-making that has been present internationally for the last 30 years. I argue that if we aim to change health inequalities, health professionals and planners need to understand the illness and health service experience of citizens. The concept of ‘health citizenship’ introduced here refers to health knowledge that integrates the lay knowledge of patients and that this integration is translated into health actions such as clinical communication and the planning of health care, programs, and policy. We illustrate our argument with the two cases: health literacy and the promotion of breastfeeding in a Canadian population living in context of poverty. This paper then concludes by addressing the leadership role, Brazilian graduate nursing schools can play in promoting ‘health citizenship’ and by doing so, contribute to fight health inequalities.

Keywords
Health citizenship, Health literacy, Breastfeeding, Nursing, Illness meaning.