Abstract
The impacts of birth defects in the society have substantially increased over the last decades in countries where the reduction of infant mortality by other causes has occurred. Birth defects surveillance represents an important source of information for planning health policies and resource allocation. In this article, we discuss the potential utilizations, methodology options, limitations, and policy issues related to birth defects surveillance. Also, the birth defects surveillance programs from US and Brazil are described and compared as an illustration of the development of surveillance systems in two countries with clearly dissimilar health systems and resource allocation for birth defects programs. Finally, we propose measures for the improvement of the existing systems in both countries focusing at the utilization of preexisting resources.

Keywords
Surveillance, Birth defects, Health information systems