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Department of Nursing in Collective Health: two decades of achievements and commitments in the field of the nursing and the health of the population

Born on February 13th, 1987, now 20 years later, the Department of Nursing in Collective Health of the Sao Paulo University Nursing School, can state that it has fully complied with the mission of producing and divulging knowledge, developing the teaching and rendering services to the community, aiming at educating competent professionals to work in the assistance, the teaching and the research in health and in nursing, by means of the development of innovative projects and in accordance with the principles and the fundamentals of the Sole Health Care System.

Being pioneer in the country, in the field of the Nursing in Collective Health, having national and international projection, we have become a reference for the education of professionals and researchers. The proof of this is that the majorities of our graduates attains and fulfill relevant positions in public institutions of health care and teaching. The partnerships, with national and international scientific organizations, reveal our social commitment with the inter-subjectivity and the innovation of science in order that it is, at the same time, updated, critical and transforming.

For such purpose, the research has attempted to develop methodologies aiming at the construction of a paradigm that has as its object the health-disease process in its collective dimension and, consequently, it is capable of transforming the assistance practices in order to meet the specificities of the epidemiologic profiles of the population. In this manner, it was pioneer in the utilization of the basic social categories of the collective health as social class, type and generation, in addition to other ones that are of relevant importance for the construction of this new knowledge such as vulnerability, adhesion to the health assistance, professional needs and competence, among others. In addition, from the innovation viewpoint, it has developed studies based on the sole, existing autochthonous theory of nursing that is the Theory of the Praxis Intervention of the Nursing in Collective Health, a fertile and promising basis for the understanding of the population health needs and the consequential nursing intervention in the health-disease process of the various social groups. It also contributed enormously, with this same goal for the development of the project prepared by the Brazilian Nursing Association, the International Classification of the Nursing Practices in Collective Health (CIPESC [in Portuguese]) that has national and international recognition as a specific nursing classification embodied in the guiding principles of the Sanitary Reform in the country and, hence, the Sole Health Care System.

As much as the methodologies, the themes that have been privileged are those ones that aim at focusing light on the most relevant health problems of our population such as sexually transmissible diseases and HIV, tuberculosis, leprosy, prevalent childhood diseases, violence, and drugs, among others.

The fruits, the partnerships and the advances reached show that a significant part, regarding the commitment of the Collective Health Nursing Department, is consolidated. Its current challenge is to develop competences for the education, research and intervention as per the critical-emancipator perspective, going forward with the principles that constituted it two decades ago and aiming at a committed, responsible, articulated work and, at the same time, revealing that it is possible to have the conception and the implementation of health policies being effective transformers of the health levels and conditions of the population as conceived by the Sole Health Care System.

In order to commemorate our trajectory and to affirm our commitment with this future, the Department organized the I International Symposium on Policies and Practices in Collective Health from the Nursing Perspective, which had as central themes Training and qualification of workers in Collective Health and Policies and practices in Collective Health. The articles, that compose this special issue, correspond to the presentations of the lecturers and to the scientific works that were rewarded at the event referred to.

We wish to hereby express our gratefulness to everyone who, in any way, has participated in our trajectory, being through the recognition of the undertaken efforts, being by the challenges that they have submitted to us and that we always try, and we will keep trying, to overcome.