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Risco e proteção à saúde e bem-estar na infância e adolescência
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Health risks, protection and well-being in childhood and adolescence

This thematic issue presents knowledge and experiences reported by researchers working with children and adolescents seen from the viewpoint of different regions and cultural contexts of Brazil and Canada. It also addresses current perspectives and the consensus of the world literature on the magnitude and relevance of health and living conditions at this young stage of development.

Health policies geared to the protection and prevention of diseases, health complications and the promotion of well-being in childhood and adolescence currently prevailing in Brazil are still timid when one considers the scale and seriousness of the unequal living conditions offered to this population group and the extended families in the different regions of Brazil. On the other hand, the new and equitable priorities for public health, for example the increasing public investment for senior citizens and for specific diseases such as dengue and AIDS, have led to the reduction of such investments for the population of children and youths, as justified by the recent decrease of the size of this group in Brazil. However, this shift in the use of resources should not fail to consider the overall condition of family and social fragility resulting from the inherent vulnerability of individuals in the development phase, who are fundamentally dependent upon family and social support.

The topics addressed in this edition represent key issues for prevention, protection and intervention in childhood and adolescence, such as pregnancy and early motherhood; the issues pertaining to homophobia; the abuse of psychoactive substances; the diseases related to sexual behavior, such as AIDS; sexual violence against children, adolescents and youths; the reporting of other violence and vulnerabilities, such as suicide and depression. Aspects for protection against vulnerability with respect to relationships between peers and afective-sexual partners in adolescence are discussed by authors from Brazil and Canada, indicating common realities and possibilities for similar action. Positive aspects for the development of children and adolescents are also presented by various authors, emphasizing the importance of personal and social resilience, social competence and family support.

The articles that comprise the volume include papers from researchers at the Université du Québec à Montréal/UQAM (Canada) and the Brazilian universities of the Southeastern and Northeastern regions of Brazil. Such diversity broadens and enriches existing knowledge, as different approaches to similar situations and contexts enable dialogue about forms of intervention, in the light of the social and family adversities to which children and adolescents are exposed.

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Guest Editors