Information and information technology in health: need for creative breaks?

In contemporary societies, the field of Information and Information Technology in Health is becoming increasingly important as an area of theoretical, methodological and technological development. However, its inclusion in health *praxis* in Brazil is not keeping pace with this speed and dynamism, when analysing the implementation of the National Health System (SUS) and its limited "appropriation" by administrators, practitioners, health councils and the population, as well as under the aegis of teaching and research institutions.

Sharing reflections on this issue is the purpose of this themed issue. Its contribution consists of presenting the problem as strategic to health *praxis* and democracy, addressing aspects that have not been sufficiently discussed. Epistemological, historical, political and economic questioning has been built up through dialogs with many different fields of knowledge, such as the law, epidemiology, sociology, management, engineering, planning and education, at their intersections with Health. Consequently, discussions on Information and Information Technology in Health must extend beyond a technicistic view, adopting a transdisciplinary approach.

Attempts are made to explore complex folds and intersections of knowledge, as required for an in-depth understanding of landmark practices and benchmarks in Information and Information Technology in Health in *today's* Brazil, aware that this merely touches on the scope of an issue that is crucial for upgrading health conditions and reducing inequalities. But it is also quite clear that the efforts presented in this theme-specific issue merely show that this is a topic that must be slotted firmly into the Political Agenda of the National Health System (SUS) and the Action Agenda for Science and Technology in Health.

The first group of articles discuss expertise related to Information and Information Technology in Health; its importance in the process of drawing up a Health Policy; content-sharing methodologies based on networks, with a proposal for a technology base underpinning professional training in Brazil's National Health System (SUS); and the contributions of Communications and Information Technologies as spaces fostering dialogs among Government and Society, Science and Technology.

A second cluster of articles discusses the quest for an even balance between individual protection and collective development, focusing on epidemiological databases; the challenge of assessing the quality of vital statistics; and the limited use made of information for ethical Health Management.

In closing, conceptual reflections on social inequalities and inequities in health highlight the need for new information and other levels of decoupage for the social fabric in order to analyze the links among social and spatial segregation, poverty and the promotion of health. The 'Opinion' article discuses the importance of information being absorbed by the Health Councils, within the context of inconsistency for a democratic political culture and the persistence of an authoritarian tradition.

These reflections prompt the question: Why (re)think this specific field, so dear to business interests and massive economic accumulation, if some break is required in the traditional rationale generated in the health area? The conclusion is that proposals must be anchored in creativeness, offering alternatives that respond to demands from historical subjects for a fairer and more just society. This is a collective task that links information, knowledge and critical action to utopian thinking.

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