

GUEST EDITOR'S LETTER

History as a window to the future: 21 years of the Graduate Program in the History of the Sciences and Health

The history of science and the history of health and diseases as none other than distinct windows to dive deeper into a single, shared history that is the history of culture, of society, which can be entered by different paths but always arrives at the same territory of social relations, of the history of these relationships and of the protagonists of this history of social relationships and society, or, if we prefer, of culture in its broader sense (Margarida de Souza Neves).

I can still see the scene in my mind, and remembering it transports me back to the Virgínia Schall Science Tent, a space for meetings and events combining science, art, and scientific dissemination. I can envision the entire audience in the opening class of the Graduate Program in the History of the Sciences and Health (Programa de Pós-graduação em História das Ciências e da Saúde, PPGHCS), holding hands, led by Professor Margarida de Souza Neves. It was the beginning of a new course at Fiocruz, its own discipline but from the outset proposing interdisciplinary dialog and the ability to face contemporary challenges. Feeling the effects of the attack on the World Trade Center, we affirmed the urgency of peace, of equity, of respect for differences, of a new global order that could ensure health, education, culture, and a decent life for all people.

In celebrating the 21 years of the PPGHCS at Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, we note that these original challenges are still present and even more urgent. This is not a matter of understanding history like a life coach and seeking lessons from the past. Instead, it is an affirmation of the absolutely essential nature of the historian's position so that society can broaden its perspective on analysis of social processes. In the field of the history of science and health, all the rich contributions and convergences from varying intellectual trajectories still have not been sufficiently evaluated: intersections between new approaches to the history of science, especially since the 1980s (Kropf, Hochman, 2011), emphasizing the processes and contexts of constructing scientific knowledge and the political dimension of these processes, and historical approaches originating in social medicine, also in dialog with different approaches, especially the work of George Rosen and Michel Foucault. These were, alongside contributions from the field of social science, which was also renewed and where teachers in the new program were trained, a meeting point and hub for creating the PPGHCS.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-59702022000400001>



With regard to the Brazilian context, incentives for research and graduate study during the 2000s were decisive, together with the favorable institutional environment. Since the creation of Casa de Oswaldo Cruz in 1985 during Sergio Arouca's term as president of Fiocruz, this unit, under leadership of Paulo Gadelha's 11 years as director, has a proven record of its dedication to historical research, historical memory and documentation, and scientific dissemination, a process of creation with strong links to the field of the history of science and health, always interacting with other institutions and domestic and international research networks. One of the landmarks of this process was the creation of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* in 1994, with Sergio Goes de Paula serving as the first editor. The role of journals in constructing the field of the history of science and its institutionalization has been the object of study by researchers at Casa de Oswaldo Cruz (Ferreira, 1996), and over time this journal also became a topic of and source for academic studies (Benchimol, Cerqueira, Papi, 2014). Certainly, historical analysis of the PPGHCS is a worthy challenge ahead of us as we celebrate 21 years of its existence and its score of 6 on the last CAPES evaluation, recognizing the excellence of our work. In this celebration I wish to thank all the coordinators, and specifically mention Luiz Otávio Ferreira, the first coordinator of the program, who took up the challenge during a time of great uncertainty due to the novelty of the course proposed at that time. Alongside the inauguration of the Museu da Vida in 1999, the creation of the PPGHCS was one of the most wide-reaching efforts during my term (1998-2005) as director of Casa de Oswaldo Cruz.

Many hands, hearts, and minds worked together during those challenging early days, and new professors contributed to this collective construction. One of the greatest successes is that students from those heroic early years are now professors and researchers at Casa de Oswaldo Cruz. During the process of development we also had the indispensable assistance of Renato Balão Cordeiro, vice president of Research and Graduate Studies at Fiocruz from 1997 to 2001, Tânia Celeste Nunes, who served as vice president of Teaching and Human Resources from 2000 to 2004, and Professor Margarida de Souza Neves, who treats us to an excellent interview published in this issue of *Manguinhos*, as I affectionately like to refer to this journal.

After discussing her trajectory as a historian (notable for her field work in the history of culture, with recent studies on medical thought on epilepsy) and as an educator at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, where she trained generations of researchers (many of whom now teach at PPGHCS), "Guida" – if you will permit me this endearment – invites us to participate in a complex reflection on the work of the historian, especially in a country with the historical characteristics of Brazil. In citing the question "What kind of country is this?" (*Que país é este?*) first formulated by the poet Affonso Romano de Sant'anna and later transformed by the band Legião Urbana into a powerful refrain, this historian invites us to reflect on how the history of science and health can offer a consistent path toward revealing answers, even if they must necessarily remain multiple and inconclusive.

In closing her statement with strong references to the difficult times faced during the covid-19 pandemic, she also made me think about the metaphor of the history of science and health as a pathway, or even a window toward better understanding of the history of societies. From my perspective, we are standing in front of a window that opens to

both the past and present, but also allows us to think about the future as a product of historical imagination, an imagination anchored in research and in the references that supported the creation of our program. Results of the human adventure, research and the teaching of history allow us to shift our points of view, critically defend science during a time of negationism, and affirm the value of historical knowledge for constructing a more democratic and inclusive society.

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