

## From the sea to the interior: the Family Health Strategy in the Brazilian Northeast

This thematic issue of *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* addresses the *Family Health Strategy in the Brazilian Northeast*. It strives to put the strategy in context and reflect critically upon its development in the environment of challenges and changes facing the Unified Health System (SUS) and Primary Health Care (PHC) in the 29 years since its implementation. It was the brainchild of the group of researchers in Family Health of the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz) unit based in the State of Ceará, and one of its institutional objectives was to enhance and streamline the Family Health Strategy (FHS). The process started 12 years ago when the institution launched the initiative to establish the Northeast Network for Training in Family Health (RENASF), comprised of 26 participating entities, including higher education institutions and representative bodies of the SUS. RENASF offers a Postgraduate course in Family Health, with 400 qualified Master of Science graduates to date, and approval has been granted to offer the Professional Doctorate in Family Health, which will provide opportunities for the training of researchers in this field of knowledge and expertise. The distance-learning Professional Master's Degree in Family Health (PROF-SAÚDE), is also established at Fiocruz - Ceará. Both programs have been introduced in various states in the Brazilian northeast, providing comprehensive coherence in the *stricto sensu* training in the FHS. This integration with FHS professionals, that includes master's students, teachers, researchers and graduates of these programs, has raised issues and fostered research and technologies to provide input for practices in PHC. Sharing the knowledge produced by this community of learning and practices in public health was one of the motivating forces behind this thematic issue.

Twelve months ago, when the decision was taken to schedule the issue, no one had any inkling of the scale of the serious health crisis that Brazil would face in the COVID-19 Pandemic. We would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express our solidarity with the families and with the health professionals who are mourning the 260,976 lives lost in the country through March 4, 2021, of which 57,738 (22%) were in the Northeast. The FHS is currently one of the main points of entry for people infected with COVID-19 into the SUS, with 89.5% of the professionals participating in a national survey reporting adaptation of attendance routines in the units to handle such cases<sup>1</sup>. We would emphasize that the FHS is also the organizational structure of the SUS, by virtue of its comprehensive scope, accessibility, and links with the community, making it capable of implementing epidemiological surveillance, mass immunization and education for non-pharmacological measures to prevent Sars-CoV-2 in the territories throughout Brazil to contain the Pandemic.

In this issue, there are 20 articles written by no less than 98 authors from the 9 northeastern states (Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe and Bahia) on topics related to the FHS and PHC. They were experienced by, researched, reflected upon, and written by physicians, nurses, dental surgeons, community health workers, nursing and oral health technicians, professionals from the Family Health Care Centers, managers, teachers and researchers. They deal mainly with: (1) Technological policies, services, practices and innovations in the Family Health Strategy; (2) Fields of professional practices, access to care and education in the Family Health Strategy.

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## References

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