

## Disability, Family and Society: a contemporary debate

In issue 21.10 of *Revista Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* of October 2016 we examine the classic theme “Disability, family and society: a contemporary debate,” bringing together articles that update discussions and advances both in the field and in the science by adopting an innovative approach. As the disability theme grows in visibility, political awareness and participation in Brazil and in the world, this thematic edition presents studies on medical, psychological, multidisciplinary, economic and socio-cultural dimensions organized in a thought-provoking, critical and interdisciplinary manner. The articles highlight the changes and tensions in the conceptual understanding of disability at the turn of the twenty-first century and how this is reflected in attitudes, practices and policies.

Brazil implemented the Disabled Persons Act in 2016 seeking to ensure and broaden access to rights and Rio de Janeiro is also the venue for the Paralympic Games, namely the major sporting event for athletes with disabilities worldwide. In this respect, articles on *disability and society*, with an emphasis on sport, social technologies and public policies were selected. There are also articles on *disability and family* addressing the forms of treatment, therapeutic resources and support networks with special emphasis on family roles, differences in gender and age brackets.

Several articles adopt a critical view of the concepts of disability, emphasizing the social model and highlighting the biomedical trends that reduce the individuals to the level of their own deficits. This gives rise to a holistic and contextualized way to see and perceive the disabled individual and foster the quest for less exclusionary relationships. A change in the way of looking at disability generates different views about its possibilities, leading to new parameters of interpretation of their potential. However, despite this conceptual advance, in many cases this vision finds no support in practices that effectively segregate and underscore the limits. On the contrary, sport is one of the fields in which the disabled person achieves good results, which is one of the best strategies to overcome barriers and attain maturity.

This thematic issue features some articles that address paradigm shifts in which the way to see and understand does not find resonance in established practices, thereby highlighting contradictions and paradoxes. The Brazilian Inclusion of People with Disabilities Act has made a great leap forward and is the basis for some of the analyses. In this respect, there is documentary analysis of the Brazilian legislative framework of policies applied to the area. There are also critical reflections on the instruments that measure functionality and regulate retirement and on the barriers to access to the Continuous Provision Benefit for disabled persons and the elderly. Recent problems indicate the need for further research in the field of science and bioethical reflection, as is the case of research into the zika virus and stem cells.

New technologies reveal options ranging from the use of the cinema as a tool to work out ways of looking at disability in the social imaginary, to creating prosthetics for physical comfort and mobility. The family is addressed in the approach to maternity, paternity and relationships with siblings, with reflections on the caregiver, stress and the importance of playfulness. There are discussions about the need to broaden support networks, social inclusion and quality of life. Lastly, there is a national survey on the prevalence of disability in Brazil and studies on physical, intellectual, auditory and visual disabilities as well as other syndromes. The authors draw attention to the need to improve access to basic health units in Brazil, bearing in mind the different degrees of vulnerability and impairment of users with disabilities.

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