

Health and Science in the Brazilian Military Dictatorship (1964-1985)

The authoritarian regime started with the civil-military coup of 1964, its ideology, policies, and programs had profound consequences for Brazilian society. These were times of economic growth but also crises and deepening inequalities, the creation and destruction of institutions, censorship and violation of human rights, and resistance and critical thinking. Public health and healthcare under the military regime were the subject of intense analysis by collective health between the late 1970s and the first decade of the country's re-democratization, and important works were published on the subject. These analyses, which were crucial in the construction of collective health itself and the fight for democracy and health reform, are no longer on the intellectual and political agenda of the field, now focusing on the Unified Health System, its implementation, advances, setbacks, and challenges. Historians and social scientists have dedicated themselves to understanding the multiple layers and facets of the military dictatorship, producing many works and interpretations essential for thinking about Brazil, yesterday and today. However, there are still few recent studies, particularly books, on health, healthcare and science and technology during the autocratic regime. Some important books pointed to research paths beginning to be explored and expanded¹⁻³.

This thematic issue aims to contribute to our better understanding of this period. It includes eight articles by historians and political scientists and aims to revisit critical topics such as healthcare policy and Indigenous health. It presents aspects of the military dictatorship programs that have not yet been thoroughly examined, such as the Integrated Program for Endemic Diseases (PIDE) and the relations between the regime and the scientific community in the field of biomedical research, the propaganda campaigns of the National Immunization Program (PNI) and the relationship between the military and pharmaceutical assistance policy at the *Central de Medicamentos* (CEME). The repressive dimension of the regime is present in the analysis of how the imprints of the dictatorship on scientific institutions, such as the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, are inscribed in personal and institutional archives. The participation of doctors in the repressive apparatus and the persecution and resistance within the medical schools, in the case of the University of São Paulo, are issues that are still sensitive and little discussed but are addressed in this dossier.

Sixty years after the military coup and four decades of democracy, we are experiencing a period of scientific and historical denialism and attacks on democracy, the 1988 Constitution, and the rights enshrined in it, as well as social policies. It is, therefore, essential to analyze science and health during this “unfortunate page of our history” from new issues and objects and with new perspectives. Understanding the history, discussing the different impacts of the military regime, its many contradictions, and its indelible legacies in science and health is an inseparable part of the defense of the institutional and political advances achieved since 1985 and the possibility of imagining and conquering new futures. This knowledge is necessary to promote policies of memory, truth, and justice, which are still timid in the field of collective health, and to update the meaning of Sergio Arouca's conference in March 1986 at the 8th National Health Conference, one year after the end of the military dictatorship: “Health is Democracy”.

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