

### **Evaluation: from theory to practice**

This thematic number presents scientific articles resulting from investigations carried out in the context of the Baseline Studies (BLS), research projects that counted on the support of the Coordination for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Department of Primary Care of the Ministry of Health and were funded by the World Bank. The study was carried out in 2005 and covered all municipalities contemplated by the Program for Expansion and Consolidation of Family Health (PROESF), that is, all municipalities of the country with more than 100 thousand inhabitants.

The study was conducted in cooperation with a great number of academic institutions from different geographical regions of the country, which were selected by public call. A team of four public health experts from different fields of expertise monitored this mega-project and followed the studies to ensure the interchange of information and the quality of hired products. The participation of ABRASCO in this process was crucial for reinforcing the legitimacy and transparency of the activities, and for promoting and facilitating the dialogue between research centers, health services, local managers and professionals as well as the dissemination of information and products.

The first results of these transversal studies we are presenting here provide a picture of the epidemiological profile of the studied populations and of the organization of the primary care network of the great urban centers in Brazil. The experience represents a first step in a process aimed at encouraging evaluative research focused at producing useful evidence and information for diagnosing and identifying changes necessary for tracing a new direction for Primary Care in the country.

The initiative also distinguishes the inductive role and responsibility of the federal authorities in institutionalizing the practice of evaluation in the health system. Only with a critical and systematic practice of professionals involved in primary care and encouraging the strengthening of negotiation nets the Unified Health System will be able to provide adequate care to users, contribute to a better health standard and account to the people for the use of the allocated funds.

The improvement of the health practices in the ongoing decentralization process, in special as refers to primary care, is responsibility of the municipalities. The diversity of conditions for an effective functioning of the system enhances considerably the importance of creating cooperative environments that favor the development of organizational conditions allowing for a sustainable integration of monitoring and evaluation into the health service routine.

Under these circumstances, the BLS aimed in the first place at promoting the implementation of new concepts with regard to evaluation and at updating and widely disseminating existing methodologies and different approaches to the evaluation of primary care.

It is thus with the intent of keeping researchers, health professionals and other sectors of the population informed about the diversity of experiences that we are offering this thematic number with articles focused on trends and innovations in the field of evaluation of primary care and pointing to new strategies for the Brazilian Family Health Program.

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