

EpiVix: Brazilian epidemiology in transition

The 9th Brazilian Congress of Epidemiology (EpiVix 2014), recently held in Vitória, Espírito Santo State, provides food for thought on the development of Brazilian epidemiology and its challenges. EpiVix embraced the task of valuing the history of epidemiology congresses by paying proper tribute to those who steadfastly organized the previous editions (to which the 9th Congress was the natural heir). It is therefore emblematic that the ninth edition inaugurated a Keynote Lecture in honor of Sergio Koifman, Chairman of the Congress of Epidemiology in Rio de Janeiro (1998) and an outstanding researcher and dear friend, recently passed away.

This year's congress was a milestone for Brazilian epidemiology. Beginning with its extraordinarily current theme, *Frontiers of Contemporary Epidemiology: from Scientific Knowledge to Action*, featuring the scientific nature of epidemiology and its conformation as a sphere of practices. The congress program highlighted one of the major current challenges in epidemiology, namely to conjugate theoretical and methodological advancements with a greater and more productive link to other member disciplines in Public Health. Without an integrated approach that allows strengthening its disciplinary foundations while simultaneously expressing its commitment to the further in-depth development of the interdisciplinary nature of Public Health, there can be no promising future for Brazilian epidemiology.

Among so many challenges that could be listed, this one seems central, precisely because of the apparent duality in the actions needed to overcome it. Much progress has been made in the theoretical and methodology field, perhaps more in the availability and incorporation of tools and techniques than in the development of theoretical concepts that provide the basis for more systemic analytical approaches to complex phenomena. In this imbalance lies the "risk" (drawing on epidemiological jargon) of an over-productive stagnation, i.e., the unbridled production of publishable pieces that lack any innovation or originality and with limited capacity to translate into social transformation. As for the tense relations between epidemiology, policymaking, health planning and management, and social and human sciences in health, I believe it is necessary (without overlooking a historical perspective on this problem) to identify and deal with new sources of strain that could affect the very future of epidemiology as a space for building knowledge and practice in Public Health.

Of course the vectors that move such questions do not lie only in the historical dilemmas that have influenced the formation and development of epidemiology itself, but are also part of the context to which the practices belong. Acritical and conservative research in its theoretical and methodological foundations, or "more of the same" (Carvalho MS et al. *Cad Saúde Pública* 2013; 29:2141-3), is also rooted in the structures for evaluation of researchers and graduate studies programs that have still not found ways to value quality over quantity, and in the dynamics of graduate training itself, which more often than not contributes to the reproduction of such ingrained habits.

Shedding light on these questions was the main legacy of EpiVix, and it behooves us to seize the moment and seek solutions and implement the necessary changes to guarantee the formation of a generation that will promote a new virtuous cycle for Brazilian epidemiology.

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