

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear reader,

This issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* is one of the most jam-packed we have ever released. Along with articles submitted for publication, it features a fascinating dossier—two, in point of fact. Edited by the sociologist Marcos Chor Maio and the anthropologist Ricardo Ventura Santos, one addresses the issue of race and genomics. The other explores science, technology, and dialogue with citizens; found in the department Debate, the latter was put together by Luisa Massarani.

A recent controversial news item comes to my mind, one I'm quite sure you didn't miss: in June, the press announced that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had released a new drug against heart failure (BiDil) to be used by blacks, or "Afro-descendants." In the history of medicine and of pharmacy, this is the first time any medication has targeted a specific race, based on the assumption that its members display a nitric oxide deficiency ("EUA estudam liberar droga só para negros," *Jornal da Ciência*, 14 Jun. 2005; "EUA aprovam droga específica para negros," *O Globo*, 25 Jun. 2005).

At the crux of this issue's dossier lie the alleged relations between race and health, a subject of growing debate around the world and inside Brazil. See, for instance, the program of the International Seminar on Race, Sexuality, and Health, held in Rio de Janeiro in November 2004 (available at www.clam.org.br).

In "Reasons for banishing the concept of race from Brazilian medicine," Sergio D. J. Pena, of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, shows that the reduced genetic variability of the human species is incompatible with the existence of races as biological entities, and therefore color or geographic ancestry have little or nothing to contribute to medical practice. Sickle cell anemia, a hereditary disease more prevalent among the black population, is analyzed both by Pena and by Peter H. Fry, of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, author of "The significance of sickle cell anemia within the context of the Brazilian government's 'racial policies' (1995-2004)." It is Penna's opinion that this and other so-called racial diseases are in fact the product of evolutionary strategies employed by populations exposed to specific infectious agents. Fry shows that in Brazil black activists have been participating heavily in the discourse surrounding sickle cell anemia, constituting a powerful catalyst in the process of naturalization of the "black race," as opposed to the "white race"—this in a nation that until recently viewed itself as biologically and culturally mestizo.

Josué Laguardia, a physician specialized in epidemiology, offers a study on high-blood pressure, another case where both genetic factors and race have been assigned causative roles. The author analyzes presuppositions underpinning arguments that racialize this pathology, alternative hypotheses found in the scientific literature, and inherent ethical aspects. Based on ethnographic research with users and professionals involved in the new reproductive technologies that permit procreation without sexual relations, Naara Luna, an anthropologist at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, discusses the conceptions of human nature implied in the biologization and genetization of kinship.

Two comprehensive, complementary studies by Oswaldo Cruz Foundation researchers close out the dossier in this issue of *Manguinhos*. In the first, Marcos Chor Maio and Ricardo Ventura Santos analyze the debates kindled by studies on the genetic profile of the Brazilian population, whose interpretation has galvanized biologists, sociologists, social movements, and other actors. In addition to pointing out the confluences between anthropology, genetics, and society in today's world, the authors explore how the hybrid born from the merger of new biological technologies with old ideological structures is influencing interpretations of contemporary Brazilian reality. In "Times of racialization," Maio and Simone Monteiro focus on the "health of the black population," a field of reflection and political intervention that gained shape between 1996 and 2004, when the ambivalent stance of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration gave way under the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to an

expansion of affirmative action policies, reaching into the public health arena. The authors draw an association between this change and the UN-sponsored Third World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001.

In our Debate department, journalist Luisa Massarani, coordinator of the Museum of Life's Studies Center (part of Fiocruz), brings highly qualified professionals together to debate the question of increasing the lay public's participation in decisions about science and technology that will have an impact on society. Experiences in Canada, Chile, the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Denmark (the latter an international model for participatory mechanisms in this area) are dissected in an interview with Lars Klüver, head of the Danish Board of Technology (Teknologirådet), and Edna F. Einsiedel, of the University of Calgary, Canada. Also participating are Tom Shakespeare, of the Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Institute; Alberto Pellegrini Filho, of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); Ricardo Ferraro, of the Universidad de Buenos Aires; Adriana J. Bacciadonne, with International Doorway to Education & Athletics; and Alberto Díaz, of the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Argentina.

Other articles bundled into this issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* came into our hands in a more spontaneous fashion, naturally representing a wider gamut of topics. Sergio Alarcon, with Rio de Janeiro's State Department for Social Action, identifies theoretical and practical streams of thought within psychiatric reform and proposes a debate on the strategic changes necessary to avoid retrogression. Ricardo Waizbort, a researcher at Fiocruz's Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, analyzes two new fields of knowledge within the biological and social sciences: evolutionary psychology endeavors to understand the human mind as a product of biological and evolutionary processes, while the fledgling field of memetics approaches cultural information and traditions as sets of ideas that use the human brain to reproduce themselves. Rita de Cássia Ramos Louzada, of the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, and João Ferreira da Silva, of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, investigate the relation between graduate studies and work based on participative observation and the accounts of doctoral candidates at a top school in the health sciences. Lastly, Marcos Henrique Fernandes, Vera Maria da Rocha, and Djanira Brasilino de Souza, all of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, examine the views of student health held by early elementary school teachers and also look at the training these professionals receive in the area.

The departments Sources and Images feature complementary material. Maria Regina Cotrim Guimarães, of the Universidade Federal Fluminense, presents an excellent piece on the renowned *Chernoviz* and other manuals of popular medicine from the days of the Empire. Theodoro Peckolt, a German naturalist and pharmacist, made valuable contributions to the development of phytochemistry in Brazil, as we learn in meticulous research conducted by Nadja Paraense dos Santos, of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

In addition to a number of book reviews that we hope will capture your interest, we are happy to say that this issue also includes two Research Notes—a department that has seen little activity, despite its potential to encourage or stimulate research projects underway. Amílcar Davyt, Bernardo Borkenztain, Fernando Ferreira, and Patrick Moyna, of the Universidad de la República de Uruguay, tell us about the development of chemistry in Uruguay, by introducing us to an outstanding figure in this field: Giovanni Battista Marini Bettolo. Daniela Barros shows how studies of body image got their start and analyzes the physiological and social aspects of this concept.

"Good grief! It won't take much and this journal will get too heavy to lift," you're probably muttering about now. I must admit I've found myself in a bit of a predicament trying to crowd so much into this editor's note, which has already gone on for long enough.

Fear not, dear reader. Starting in 2006, *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* will be published quarterly, giving it back the trim figure it had in the days when contributions were harder to come by.

Jaime L. Benchimol

Editor