



ISC - Institute of Collective Health, Federal University of Bahia: 18 years of contribution to Collective Health

The Institute of Collective Health – ISCⁱ of the Federal University of Bahia – UFBA, was created in 1995 as a contemporary proposal to generate new paradigms for research in collective health, to train professionals to the National Unified Health System – SUS, and to stimulate a new sanitary practice in the context of a society in transition. In the say of those who originally constituted the Institute it reveals itself as a "concrete utopia". Its origins lie in the long standing experience in teaching, researching and in technical cooperation developed during 20 years of operation of ISC's first group of professionals who worked before in the Department of Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Medicine at UFBA. The process of constitution lasted several years and involved a number of important academic leaders and support of prominent representatives of the health reform movement at the national level. This effort produced a set of proposals subsequently approved in all deliberative bodies of the University, culminating in the recognition by the National Education Council at the Ministry of Education in May 1995. The main and office building is located at the University Campus of Canela, in the city of Salvador, State of Bahia, Northeast Brazil.

Its foundation occurred in the scenario of redefinition of theory and practice in the field of collective health. Its innovative structure is composed of integrated programs of investigation, teaching and technical cooperation, involving professors, researchers, technical staff and students of undergraduate and graduate levels, instead of the traditional school departments. This model encourages interdisciplinarity, the joint work of professionals and students, and also stimulate the search for collaboration and dialogue with professionals from various University units and other institutions (non-governmental organizations, state and county health secretariats, ministries, national and international organizations in the health area), beside other educational and research centers in Brazil and abroad.

The institutional management is carried out by a Governing Board, formed by the coordinators of undergraduate and graduate courses, of the integrated programs, representatives of the administrative personnel and students. It is headed by a directorate formed by a General Director, an Administrative Director and an Academic Director. The Academic Director coordinates the Scientific and Technical Council of the Institute. General activities are performed by a structure of shared administrative support.

The Institute's central objectives are: to prepare professors, researchers and technical staff in collective health; to produce knowledge in scientific and technological fields in health, starting from basic disciplinary axes of collective health: Epidemiology, Policy, Planning & Management in Health and Social Sciences in Health; to foster projects that generate, implement and evaluate technologies and of technical cooperation and to further advance collective health training in undergraduate courses of the health area.

The Integrated Research and Technical Cooperation Programs are organized according to thematic areas along with priority lines of investigation and interagency collaboration, and

is currently eight: Policy, Planning, Management & Evaluation in Health; Community and Family Health, Training and Evaluation of Primary Care, Gender and Health, Economy, Technology and Innovation in Health, Environmental and Occupational Health, Infectious Diseases and Nutritional Deficiencies and Sanitary Health Surveillance. The ISC has on its staff 31 professors of permanent full-time dedication, other 10 professionals of ISC and other University units, professors who are accredited at the graduate programs and research associates working in ISC's Integrated Programs.

The main research areas in development includes: planning, management and health services; situation analysis and health information; evaluation of systems, programs and health services; environmental and worker health; gender and health; community, family and health; the socio-cultural and health-illness-care processes; urban violence and health, macro and micro determinants of communicable diseases and nutritional deficiencies; epidemiology of chronic diseases; child development and mental health; assessment in primary care and health promotion; health economics and health technology assessment.

Institutional partnerships to implement university extension activities and technical cooperation have involved the Integrated Programs. Joint work with the Ministry of Health in Brazil, the Pan American Health Organization, the World Health Organization, and the Secretary of Health of the State of Bahia among others has resulted in opportunities for research and knowledge production integrating teaching and health services. ISC is a collaborating center of the Secretariat of Health Surveillance, and is a collaborating center to the technical area of worker health both to the Ministry of Health. The first had a recent development of the application of web technology to obtain data on Dengue and other communicable diseases and the second offers permanently national courses in worker health applying distance education methods and techniques and develops the surveillance portal in worker health via internet among other activities. Some other continuous international cooperative work has been done with the New York University, Michigan State University, The Netherlands Institute for Health Sciences, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and the *Instituto de Salud Colectiva* of Lanus University in Argentina.

ISC also develops some large scale strategic projects like the ELSA - Longitudinal Study of Adult Health. This project constitutes a longitudinal multicenter study focused on cardiovascular diseases and diabetes in the adult population, with over 15 000 participants who are employees of universities and Oswaldo Cruz Foundation – Fiocruz (Ministry of Health) in six Brazilian cities, with support from the Ministry of Health (Secretariat of Science and Technology), Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation – MSTI (Health Sector Fund), FINEP – National Financing Agency of Studies and Projects & CNPq – National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (MSTI). The ISC coordinates an Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation (INCT) of CNPq, named CITECS - Science, Innovation and Technology in Health – that develop integrated lines of research in innovation, improvement of health technology, technology assessment and economic evaluation in health. Another important project is the SCAALA - Study on Asthma and Social Change in Latin America. This multidisciplinary multicenter study involving research centers such as the ISC in Brazil and in other countries such as Ecuador, England and the United States is carried out recognizing the high prevalence of allergic diseases and asthma in Latin America and aims to study its determinants. The study focuses on the so-called "hygiene hypothesis" as a central determinant of the increased occurrence of these problems. The Integrated Programs are also the basis of a complex and vast network of national and international collaborations. This involves frequent visits

(short and long) of researchers and students from outside and the Institute's students and researchers to other centers.

Other strategic initiatives in teaching, research and university extension include the *Net-Escola* (School-Net), a project fitted for the development of distance learning, knowledge management and the application of information and communication technologies in collective health, and in the area of sanitary surveillance some projects for training professionals of public health services.

The Institute conducts teaching activities in undergraduate health courses at UFBA, offers the undergraduate course in collective health, the master's and doctoral courses, some specialization courses in cooperation with other academic units, including *sensu lato* courses under the modality of distance education and training courses for managers and technicians who work in health services locally, in Bahia and other States.

The Graduate Program in Collective Health aims to develop an innovative approach to integrate education, research and technical cooperation, emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of collective health and favoring the integration of students, researchers and professionals from different areas and diverse academic background. This graduate program was created in 1974 with the Master of Community Health at that time. In 1989, it was implemented a Doctorate in Public Health, initially with only one concentration in Epidemiology. With the founding of the Institute, all *stricto sensu* graduate courses were transferred to the new university unit. Since then there are three areas of concentration in the Master and PhD programs: Epidemiology; Policy, Planning & Management in Health and Social Sciences in Health.

Beginning in 2001, the Institute expanded its graduate teaching activities implementing the so called Professional Master's Degree in Collective Health. It obtained recognition by Ministry of Education from its beginning and is presently rated at the highest level (five) for its kind. This category of course comes to meet a historical demand of the area, which is to qualify professionals involved with the management and implementation of health services, who wish to deepen their knowledge without necessarily pursuing a career in academia. The pedagogical project of this Program provides places in six concentration areas: Teaching in Family Health; Health Systems Management; Health Surveillance; Epidemiology in Health Services; Health Information Systems and Health Technology Assessment, defined according to partnerships with public health institutions of the national, state and municipal governments that have specific demands. However, it is up to the Course's Program Board to decide about offering the course and when to perform it, based on feasibility analysis, especially considering the availability of teaching hours for disciplines, activities and students' orientation. Between 2007 and 2010 some 59 professionals concluded Masters Professional Courses of ISC in Bahia and other states.

With an experience of more than three decades of teaching, the Graduate Program in Collective Health has produced 114 doctors and 354 masters by the end of 2010, and has consistently been regarded as a center of excellence (it was graded level "A" since 1982, in level six in 2004 and presented the highest score (seven) for the 2007-2009 CAPES-CNPq assessment). The curricula were fitted to maintain a basic core of themes that are common to the three areas of concentration, preserving interdisciplinarity, and the disciplines and activities that are specific to each area. The expectations about the final product of the courses have been revised, and it has resulted in stimulating the production of scientific articles (minimum of one for the master and three for the doctorate) in order to maintain

quality and provide for rapid dissemination of dissertations and theses. The inclusion of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows within the Integrated Programs, preferably linking them to research projects of their supervisors, and with better funding and viability, have also been an important strategy in this direction.

It is highlighted the Multidisciplinary Residence Program in Social Medicine and the Mental Health Multidisciplinary Residence Program. The first one with a concentration in Family Health is offered on a regular basis and celebrated 14 years of uninterrupted operation. This course has an average of 17 students per year (first and second year students). It maintains training in Family Health Units in the city of Salvador and in conjunction with basic health attention services at other counties in Bahia. The Residence Program in Mental Health began in 2008 and admits an average of 15 students per year, developing training activities at the network of mental health services in Salvador and in other cities in the state of Bahia.

Some 750 undergraduate students of UFBA are received each year to attend required disciplines in Epidemiology, Introduction to Collective Health and Health Policy. Those are offered by ISC in two annual semesters for courses in Medicine, Nutrition, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Health Engineering and Psychology, and since 2009 also for the Interdisciplinary Bachelor Degree in Health. Within the teaching area, as a result of most recent institutional development, it took place in 2009 one of the main goals established since the Institute's foundation, initiating the Undergraduate Program in Collective Health with 45 annual vacancies. A pioneer course at that time, today it is recognized by at least 20 other similar courses throughout Brazil. It was done inspired by the need to train a greater number of health professionals with technical and scientific knowledge and capacity to understand and act over any health problem, and in recognition that the moment of consolidation of SUS requires undergraduate courses in the area.

This complex set of activities needs to be managed by its coordinators and direction but also needs to be constantly evaluated and redefined, taking into account its current Master Plan for the 2004-2013 period. In this sense, the Institute has created a Scientific and Technical Council with the central mandate to think about future institutional developments, but first of all to formulate concrete proposals to be evaluated in extended meetings involving all personnel who operate at ISC. Annually at its Assembly the key institutional issues are discussed and the choices and alternatives forwarded to the Governing Board for decision and implementation.

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