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# The Negative Social Representation of the Process of Health/Sickness/Care in the Press

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### SC20084(1)Menéndez-Di Pardo (B)

**Menéndez E, Di Pardo R. La representación social negativa de los procesos de salud/enfermedad/atención en la prensa escrita. [The Negative Social Representation of the Process of Health/Sickness/Care in the Press.] Salud Colectiva (Buenos Aires, Argentina) 2008 enero-abril; 4(1): 9-30.**

**Objectives:** To analyze the negative information published by the Mexican press on certain processes of health/ disease/care and to review its main theoretical explanations.

**Methodology:** Analytical and interpretive.

**Results:** The authors note that in the media of Mexico prevails the representation of health care as a catastrophe. The observation parts from the analysis of linked issues such as the process of reproductive health and the HIV / AIDS rates, the rise of avian influenza and the provision of health services. Before the images forged and disseminated by the media, the authors analyze the economic, political and ideological foundations of these explanations. In regard to reproductive health and HIV / AIDS, the media shape and transmit the image or social representation that the life of the individual is at risk if someone engages in unprotected sex. In this sense, both the HIV-AIDS and avian influenza are spread by the press as alarming processes, leading the population to purchase and consume medicines. Even several non-governmental organizations fighting HIV / AIDS use the argument of the disaster as a mechanism for more funding for their activities. For the authors, the fear, the danger and uncertainty are factors that the press emphasizes with political, economic and ideological purposes underlying. In this sense, the media are concerned with highlighting: 1) increasing sales of products for the benefit of pharmaceutical companies, and 2) the allegations of collusion between the state health officials and pharmaceutical companies to negotiate with health Mexican official services.

In the case of the health services of the state, some private companies are more interested in disseminating in the media negative information about the following topics: a) the link between health authorities and certain pharmaceutical companies involved in buying and selling drugs, and b) poor technical and vocational skills in health and limitations of social security benefits. The authors explain that the media reporting on the risks obtains their information from the institutions themselves, health teams and cultural critics. They fuel the catastrophic representation with images of fear, uncertainty and risks. In this way, negative representation generates four effects: 1) immobility and passivity by the people, 2) the fragmentation of society; 3) the reduction of cooperation, and 4) the increase of mutual mistrust.

For the authors the dominant ideology is disseminated through the media; it allows powerful sectors of society to reorganize and refocus the knowledge of the subordinate classes according to their own interests. The spread of health problems in catastrophic terms consolidates the domination by and strengthens the economic prosperity of the powerful sectors.

**Conclusions:** For the authors, the social representation of the processes of health / disease / care is exposed in the media as an economic problem. However, the additional representation of health as a catastrophe in the press has contrasting functions, such as, on the one hand, the cohesion and protest of subaltern groups, and on the other, the facilitation and fulfillment of the interests and objectives of the dominant sectors.