Francisca Praguer Fróes: Medicine, Gender and Power in the Trajectory of a Doctor in Bahía (1872-1931)

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Objectives: To describe the career and contributions of Francisca Praguer Fróes to the study of medicine, gender and power in Brazil.

Methodology: Descriptive analytical

Results: Francisca Praguer Fróes was one of five Brazilian women who completed higher education studies in 1893. Their foray was made possible by the growth of urbanization, industry and strengthening of women in employment. Her family instilled in her feminist values. Francisca Praguer Fróes practiced medicine in Salvador Bahia, Brazil. She specialized in gynecology and obstetrics. She became interested in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and in protecting the health rights of women in all social and economic status ranges. She inserted hygienic precepts into her medical propositions. These precepts focused on protecting health of the female body, providing prenatal care, promoting sexual morality claim against adultery and supporting divorce. Other proposals were for equal rights and obligations within the family, sex education for both sexes, the establishment of prenuptial agreements and monogamy. Francisca Praguer Fróes was a pioneer in the public debate of issues related to morals and sex in the Bahia Catholic community. She attributed male adultery to unprotected sex and considered that women sex-workers were not solely responsible for the transmission of venereal diseases. She also participated in three regenerative modern cultural and political projects. One was to recognize the citizenship of women and to defend their health by fighting male infidelity. Another was to manage women’s voting rights and their struggle against male domination. One more was to establish civil and political rights for women, recognizing motherhood as work. These proposals allowed female development in areas dominated by men.

Conclusions: Francisca Praguer Fróes was a doctor and a feminist reformist in a historical moralist moment. Her contribution to moral and sex education contributed to the establishment of health principles and to the recognition of civil and political rights of women.