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Social Medicine before the Report of the Commission of Social Health Determinants, World Health Organization

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Objective: To review the contributions of the work of the International Workshop "Social Determinants of Health", organized by the Latin American Social Medicine Association in 2008.

Methodology: Descriptive analytical.

Results: The author presents four central ideas on global reports and those submitted by the working groups of the Commission, according to the Social Determinants of Health of the World Health Organization (WHO) and discussed by the organizing committee.

First, the list of contextual elements that contribute the appearance of these determinants include the presence of three phases: a) the emergence of Selective Primary Health Care, whose implementation involves the improvement of health statistics, b) decreased social equity and the emergence of for-profit health systems, and c) the displacement of the WHO by the World Bank in the direction of health policy and a subsequent formation of a Commission on Social Determinants of Health to seek fairness.

Second, the social determinants of health involves two determinants: a) structural, such as the socioeconomic and political context, socioeconomic status, social structure and social class, and b) intermediaries, such as living and working conditions, behavioral and biological factors, psychosocial factors and health system.

Third, the problem of inequality, inequity and injustice is rooted in the position of people in the social order. In this sense, the author identifies two possible solutions discussed by the speakers: a) formulation of social policies that contribute to the empowerment of individuals, communities and countries, and b) the redistribution of social wealth to promote a healthy and prosperous life.

Fourth, the problem of political action raises the question of dominance of the neoliberal system. For the author, the speakers proposed that the central actors are the people of the world working through their organizations and movements and their social and political networks.

Conclusions: For the author, the social determinants of health discussed at the International Workshop organized by the Latin American Social Medicine Association in 2008 are structural and intermediary. However, the author concludes that feedback from the speakers favor the development of more inclusive social policies, redistribution of wealth and building alliances within and among the peoples of America.