The Care Experience in the Family Health Program (PSF): Potentials and Limits

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Objectives: To describe the comprehensiveness of care, and discuss the role of creativity and sensitivity of health professionals in the Family Health Program, and analyze the possibilities of institutionalization and sustainability in Natal, Brazil between 2005 and 2007.

Methodology: Case study. It describes the experiences of care developed in the Family Health Program. These include projects implemented by health professionals of the program. The data collection techniques are document analysis, observation and semi-structured interviews of the professionals. The data analysis is thematic and analytical.

Results: The authors present the reflections of practitioners on the issues discussed with interviewees, among which are the following: socio-health and care experiences, backgrounds, motivations, objectives and development of experiences and conceptions of integration and sustainability.

In the first theme, participants described their context as one composed of marginal metropolitan areas, poor and with inadequate infrastructure. They cited as innovative care experiences the talks that promote health education among themselves through physical activities and performing arts or folk arts. In analyzing this evidence, practitioners visualize that the needs of users are the main reason for promoting health. The authors then present three achievements in the development of these experiences: 1) interaction between professionals, users and community, achieved through educational talks, 2) recreational activities and physical, and 3) stimulation of human potential and self-esteem of users.

In the concepts of comprehensiveness, the authors describe the value of emancipatory pedagogy applied to improve the quality of life of users. First, the program transforms the relationship between professionals and users, making it more human. In addition, the happiness, welfare and social support are present in physical and recreational activities as well as in developing skills to integrate into formal or informal work. On the issue of sustainability, the authors describe five characteristics: a) institutionalizing, b) formalization, c) financing, d) political support and e) visibility. Around them, the following issues are relevant: institutionalization and formalization are given to the projects, which promote self-care activities and self esteem. Funding is fragile and poor. The non-partisan political support favors the community. The visibility of experiences in Natal acquired notoriety for their relational and humanitarian character, health promotion, self-care and improved quality of life.

Conclusions: For the author, the comprehensiveness of health promotion emerges from the joint between promotion and assistance within the paradigm. The author concludes that the experiences of care and human development promote self awareness and creativity among health professionals.