Technical health care models, administration and organization of health care: Everything counts in the struggle for SUS consolidation

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Objectives: This article proposes a critical reflection on the current state of development of the National Health System (SUS, in Portuguese).

Methodology: The main proposals of the post-dictatorship Movement for Brazilian Health Reform were taken as a reference for: a) a model for democracy: an egalitarian utopia, along with construction of local power supported by social democratic management; b) a proposal for reconceptualizing health, recognizing the social determination of the health-illness process, with a perspective of meeting population health needs through integrated health care; and c) criticism of hegemonic health care practices, proposing a new division of labor, incorporating the user into an active role in constructing health. A particular focus is placed on democratic commitment to the right to health and to construction of the system and its policies, and to the transformation of health care practices and the technical health care model. The dilemmas encountered and the daily work of family health teams, considered the front line of basic health care, is examined.

Results: There is a persistent overvaluation of doctors at the expense of the work of other health professionals. Similarly, the hospital is viewed as the backbone of the system, since the most advanced technology is concentrated there. It will not be possible to transform the logic of health resource distribution, which continues to be targeted mainly towards tertiary or complex care. There is an imbalance between the capacities of state and municipal health care services.

Conclusions: A democratic radicalization is necessary, which would enable the active, effective participation of municipal health administrators, workers and users in construction of the SUS, as an essential condition for building a strong system and the right to health care. Broad segments of technicians, politicians and academics are considered indispensable for building the strong SUS we need: one that is user-centered, democratic and life-affirming.