12-9-2008

Social Medicine, Sexuality and Health

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Objective: Setting up a theoretical proposal derived from the socio-medical field for the study of cultural determination and the relationship between sexuality and health.

Methodology: After viewing homosexuality as a paradigmatic manifestation of sexuality in modern societies, the author reviewed a set of theoretical works, statistics and empirical studies related to culture, gender and sexuality. Then he articulated such topics with two subjects for study of social medicine: a) unequal distribution of health-disease process according to sexual orientation and b) organized social response to homosexuality and HIV-AIDS.

Results: The analysis shows the existence of a distinct distribution of certain health dangers dependent on sexual orientation, and the significance created around sexual practices that determine the way society responds to health problems associated with sexuality. Various studies corroborate, on the one hand, that gay men are more affected by mental health problems, homicide and HIV-AIDS; and on the other hand, that historically society has stigmatized homosexuality, so the social response toward homosexuals is characterized by discrimination, insecurity and less social support to help solve their health problems. Theoretical works suggest several explicative notions to these phenomena in whose analysis are fundamental: the processes of social structuring of sexuality, the social construction of masculinity and the cultural development of homophobia. These processes are integrated into the concepts of cultural alterity and "otherness".

Conclusions: Looking at the above, it is possible to form an alternative theoretical framework to explain social inequalities in health affecting gay men. To distinguish the meanings and practices about sexuality allows the identification of health problems that affect different human groups in terms of sexual orientation.