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The Pitfalls of a "Positive Concept of Health"

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Camargo Jr. K. As armadilhas da “concepção positiva de saúde”.

Objectives: To present and discuss options to both the dichotomous and reductionist biomedical model, and to the difficulties that such alternatives imply for the concept of extended health coverage.

Methodology: Analytical and interpretive.

Results: This paper presents two counterpoints: one on the critiques of the biomedical model, and the other on the proposals that emerge from such criticism. For the author, the problem lies not just in the concept of illness, but in its reification or objectification. The disease can be understood as a theoretical and heuristic artifact that organizes knowledge available and defines a certain class of problems that are entrusted to health professionals, limiting its scope. For the author, the concept of disease in biomedicine articulates three interconnected problems: 1) the vague concept of disease, 2) the biological reductionism of biomedicine, and 3) the reification of the concept of "disease."

The risk of an excessive emphasis on an assumed "positive definition" of health as a guideline for health services, is that it favors expanding the range of "health sector" actions to all aspects of life and human experience, so radically that it is even more deeply entrenched than the kind of medicalization that was denounced by the pioneers in this field for the past four decades.

Conclusions: The author concludes that it is necessary to replace the concept of disease by a heuristic and classifying resource that could help to identify, accept, explore and organize the suffering of the patient, so as to facilitate the selection and monitoring of therapeutic processes.