

## Health services research and evaluation

The scientific and technological development and political and economic changes characterizing Western capitalist societies have led to not only an increasing appreciation of health as a central dimension of individual and collective wellbeing, but also to the establishment of increasingly broad and complex health care systems. One of the main challenges for scientific knowledge in general is the development of solid research which has both a scientific perspective and is feasible, legitimate, and applicable; this challenge is especially relevant to a field such as Public Health. The challenge for Public Health in Brazil is now reflected in the pressing need to create knowledge, methods, and technology to provide backing for the comprehensive development of the Unified National Health System (SUS). From this perspective, health services research is particularly relevant in that it focuses on producing knowledge on health systems and services with the objectives of designing policies and improving performance.

The Public Health field in Brazil has a widely recognized scientific output on issues related to medicine and society, health policies, and epidemiology. However, studies in Brazil focusing on health systems and services and health care practices from a collective perspective are still in a phase of conceptual and methodological definition, exploring the intersections with the areas of health policy, economics, and management, epidemiology, and clinical care.

This supplement was planned to outline the Brazilian research output in this field, in addition to including theoretical and conceptual papers that seek to discuss the field and indicate the possibilities for its expression and linkages. This special issue thus aims to help map the health services research by the current Brazilian Public Health field. A strategy was adopted to identify graduate studies output in this topic area by consulting researchers from the area of evaluation in health services, programs, and technologies. The texts selected as original articles do not exhaust the existing output, but allow readers to identify the growing trends in research linked to academia. The diversity of papers expresses the potential for health services research in Brazil, reflects the breadth and relevance of the research topics, and explores and debates the limitations, challenges, trends, and intersections with other Public Health disciplines and other areas of knowledge. Researchers were invited from the fields of epidemiology and health management to debate the above-mentioned health services research issues.

The debate article presents the characteristics of the health services research field from an international perspective, with selected discussants who work on research issues related to health services in their respective specialties, thereby providing key contributions. This supplement as a whole is also expected to foster and guide future output in health services knowledge in general and in particular on the SUS.

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