

Editorial

Global Health and Health Diplomacy: an emerging dialogue between Health and International Relations

DOI: 10.3395/reciis.v4i1.361en

This thematic issue of RECIIS has been produced to foster discussion on some thinking that points to an emerging dialogue between the fields of health and international relations, and is advancing the contemporary debate about global health and health diplomacy at a moment when these subjects are gaining the status of national priorities and coming to prominence on a global scale.

The intention is to present contributions by researchers and practitioners from Brazil and elsewhere that allow the concepts, visions, practices and critical analyses involved in this debate to be considered from different analytical approaches.

Fiocruz's concern with this interaction is not new, but has taken on special importance over the past ten years, as changes in Brazil's foreign policy have called for the institution to play an important leading role in international health cooperation, attesting ever more clearly to its historical international vocation.

Since the 1980s, Fiocruz has been present in the "international health" debate, participating in endeavours led by the PAHO/WHO to train "leaders" at the regional level to carry out the activities that would make it possible to achieve the goal of "Health For All by the Year 2000" with the Primary Health Care strategy. Then, in the 1990s, it joined the discussions over reviewing both the term "international health" and the training activities directed to end, particularly at the landmark workshop "International Health: a field of professional study and practice", held in Quebec, Canada, from 18 to 20 March, 1991.

At that time, it was already realised that action for health at the international level could not prosper without capacity building also in the field of diplomacy and international relations, in addition to the classic technical and managerial training, as was made explicit by Mirta Roses, then PAHO

Representative in Bolivia, at a workshop in Sucre in 1993. Mirta warned of the need to embark on discussions and to formalize a field of study that would bring these two areas together. In the same way, in 1991, Ulysses Panisset and Mário Rovere, respectively, differentiated "health as an international issue" and "the international dimensions of health", referring to problems that could be solved only at the international level and through typically diplomatic negotiations.

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the dialogue between health and international relations has gained fresh impetus and is reshaping to encompass new issues, more than ever demanding new approaches to apprehend these new realities. Global health, global health governance, health diplomacy, health in national foreign policy, and health and security (both national and international) are examples of subjects that have become the centre of attention for governments, academics and numerous other local, regional, international and global actors. It is no coincidence that, in 2007, the necessary interrelation between these two areas was clearly recommended by the Oslo Ministerial Declaration "Global Health: a pressing foreign policy issue of our time". And the term Health Diplomacy emerged.

The thinking set out in this special issue forms part of a debate ranging from relations between globalisation and health (poverty, exclusion, risks, rights, migrations, trade) through to the dynamics surrounding international actors (diplomacy, cooperation, foreign aid, donations, agreements, conventions) and other issues. It is framed against the backdrop of power asymmetries in a globalised world and the dispute intrinsic to relations among nation-States.

Its point of departure is that both subject areas – global health and health diplomacy – are multidimensional and demand transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological

toolkits in order to be understood. Both fields have emerged over the past few decades, but their meanings and respective conceptual frameworks are as yet underdeveloped and that set of analytical tools is being built up gradually.

The texts published here are rather diverse. They include an analysis of the world system and power dynamics among nation-States (Fiori; Nosaki) and discuss Brazil's current foreign policy (Vidigal) and international cooperation, from different standpoints and in terms of different dimensions and specific issues (Sato, Torrontegui, Pires et al., Fronteira & Dussault, Pires de Campos et al.; Lima & Pires de Campos). They debate definitions and concepts (Kickbusch, Buss & Ferreira, Almeida), analyse national policies and international programmes in historical and comparative perspective (Hochman) and focus on specific subjects – some more-, some less-explored – such as violence in the health workplace (Campos & Pierantoni) and intellectual property (Chamas). They take the form of original papers, technological advances, ongoing research and book reviews. For all their diverse content, they have in common the endeavour to reflect on complex realities that are having substantial – and differential – impact on the conditions of life and health of populations worldwide and are challenging the work of cooperation supposedly directed to overcoming those realities.

We thank RECIIS and the Health Communication and

Technology Institute (*Instituto de Comunicação e Informação Tecnológica em Saúde, ICICT*), at Fiocruz, for the invitation to organise this thematic issue, and also the journal's editorial team for their dedication and enthusiasm in editing it. We are grateful to the National Research Council (*Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa, CNPq*) and the Rio de Janeiro Research Funding Agency (*Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Rio de Janeiro, Faperj*) for, respectively, the research productivity fellowship and support grant, which ensured the working conditions necessary and facilitated preparation of this publication. We also thank the International Relations Centre (*Centro de Relações Internacionais, CRIS*) at Fiocruz for its financial support for finalising the journal.

Lastly, this positive outcome also owes much to Rodrigo Pires de Campos, a fellow of the Federal District Research Funding Agency (*Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Distrito Federal, FAP-DF*) working at the Fiocruz Regional Office in Brasília (*Direção Regional da Fiocruz, Direb/Fiocruz-Brasília*) and a member of our Research Group, whose unconditional support was fundamental at several stages in the journal's preparation.

We are aware that this production far from covers all aspects and intricacies of this dialogue, but it certainly makes a good start and achieves its main purpose of stimulating debate and thinking.

Good reading,
Celia Almeida
Guest Editor