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Discussing the Relationship Between Venue and Learning in the Education of Health Professionals

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Objectives: To discuss the relationship between the education of health professionals and the off-campus venues where their practicums or internships are served, in order to modify and implement innovations in the curriculum to meet identified needs.

Methodology: The study was based on the theory of complexity and multi-referentiality. Between April and June 2001, ten focus group interviews were conducted with eight groups of professors, three groups of students, and two groups of community health leaders and lay health promoters. Direct observation was also employed. Qualitative analysis of the data was thematic and enunciative.

Results: The study showed that for students to experience significant learning, it was not enough to determine new locations for practicums. Also needed is a reflection on the practicum as a reference point for asking questions and receiving explanations, and for transforming traditional curriculum structures. This implies using experience to develop a new relationship between the university, knowledge, and educational values.

Conclusions: The university must learn to listen to the practicum experiences wherein health care is taught and learned, and should invest in a solid, appropriate education for the students. A proposal for training professionals by means of ethical, supportive, and critical solutions is made. The study reveals the lack of cooperative work between the university and the community, cemented with solid commitments.