



EDITORIAL



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Professor Giovanni Berlinguer: healthcare, nursing and ethics will all miss you!

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I was privileged enough to have the opportunity to personally get to know Professor Berlinguer (1924–2015). It was in 2002 during the 2nd International Conference on Nursing Research, an event that took place in the town of Águas de Lindóia in São Paulo State of Brazil marking the 60th anniversary of the School of Nursing at the University of São Paulo. Professor Berlinguer travelled from Italy to participate in the opening session entitled “The political, social and ethical meanings of research”⁽¹⁾. He ended up staying for almost a week, chatting, socializing and above all being himself, a human being of the highest order, with a sharp intellect, and a fantastic sense of humor and cordiality, qualities that are rarely encountered in people of his stature. In short, he was a real treasure of a person.

15 years ago, our Journal relied on readers’ subscriptions for its survival. That has changed, and we now receive some public funding and editing fees from the authors, whose research is selected after passing through a rigorous peer review process. At the time, we needed to increase the number of subscribers and dashed a slogan across the Journal’s cover: *Sign up now!* We had distributed this edition among the participants at the conference and Professor Berlinguer surprised as all when, at the end of the congress he held up a copy of the *Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP* and said “*Sign up, now!*”, eliciting laughs from the audience. He had shown his commitment to the Journal’s cause. Subsequently there was indeed a significant increase in the number of subscriptions, thanks no doubt to our new salesman! At the occasion of his passing in April this year, many institutions posted messages on the site. I particularly liked the tribute on the ABRASCO site, “Adeus to Giovanni Berlinguer”⁽²⁾.

Professor Berlinguer wrote a large number of works, many of which have been translated into Portuguese. One of the highlights among them is *Boiética Coditiana* (Daily Bioethics) that was reviewed by Professor Volnei Garrafa⁽³⁾ and published in 2005. The central concern of the book was with daily events, or “things that happen every day but that should not happen” and “threshold situations” or the “frontiers of knowledge” and these ideas were included in the reflections that he shared at the conference in Águas de Lindóia. During the event, Professor Berlinguer made an important intervention on the theme of “science and its applications: for whose benefit?”⁽¹⁾. He ended the conference saying: “I think that uneasiness arises as a result of the knowledge that the world’s power is concentrated in a few hands, and that this represents a block, a fundamental obstacle that prevents citizens of all nations on the planet from participating in decisions that affect their futures”⁽¹⁾.

The dissemination of research results followed by a debate about the ideas that have been presented, represents an element of scientific research that is increasingly important. As scientific editors, we take seriously the responsibility to disseminate research, and we recognize that the same ethics that govern research during the fieldwork or developmental phases should also guide the write-up and dissemination phases. In recent years, scientific discoveries are quickly disseminated, largely as a result of electronic mechanisms. Alongside this,

over the last decades the quantity of studies published (and referenced) has come to be overvalued to the detriment of the quality of such research. I mentioned this in another editorial – Is Research necessary? Not evaluation...⁽⁴⁾ – in which I pointed out the risks of a ranking system that can lead to researchers artificially (not to mention dishonestly) increasing the number of articles that they publish. Mechanisms are increasingly being “invented” to bypass ethics in research and publishing, to the point that counter measures have been “created”, either at the publishing phase (such as through plagiarism search tools), or during earlier phases, namely during the development of the research itself. What is worrying is that the creation of mechanisms to bypass ethics seems to be quicker than the counter measures. Literary (and, in our case, scientific) piracy is on the rise and as a result all of us, including researchers, authors, scientific editors, reviewers, must all take care to navigate our daily responsibilities in a way that is ethical. If there are doubts about the modern day meaning of ethics – in healthcare, nursing, research and publishing – why don’t we return to Professor Berlinguer’s works? They will no doubt put us back on track!

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