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Editor of the Supplement

Living with AIDS

It has been 25 years since the first AIDS cases were identified in Brazil. Due to the lack of efficient public health measures to control its transmission, the Brazilian public health, in fact virtually the whole nation, has developed strategies to minimize the impact of this pandemic in the country.

To live with AIDS implies the perception that the possibility, in the short or medium term, to reach effective control of this disease, just as it could be achieved with smallpox, measles and poliomyelitis, does not exist. It means to acknowledge that the disease control process is slow, thus requiring the qualification of capable professionals so that society's behavioral changes take place in a safe, rational manner, without stereotypes or prejudice. In order to guarantee this, it is necessary that different sectors of society gather data and information on all visible and invisible aspects of attitudes concerning the disease.

To form this "database", the safest and most adequate, yet difficult and slow, strategy is to continually qualify highly capable professionals according to the several AIDS control and treatment aspects, so that they are also able to provide knowledge about the determining factors that cause the spread of this disease.

The world experience has shown that the determining factors for AIDS spread are peculiar to each society or social group. Thus, there are no universal determining factors, in spite of their being reduced to the dangerous extreme of the relation between sex and drugs.

Four years ago, the *Revista de Saúde Pública* published a supplement comparable to this one, which included work from students and professors participating in a training process in AIDS qualitative research. At that time, the editorial was entitled "*Responsabilidade Social*" (Social Responsibility), something that has been maintained, even though the present supplement symbolizes the *Revista's* participation in the national effort to live with AIDS in a not peaceful manner, to qualify professionals and to change behavior.

In the public health strategy designed throughout this quarter of a century, society's behavioral change in relation to itself is an essential part of this process. It is not enough to announce the need to change behavioral characteristics when these are not known. This is where the great contribution to qualitative research in public health, particularly about AIDS, comes in.

The *Revista de Saúde Pública's* experience in publishing qualitative studies has been extremely gratifying and successful to this day, something comparable to the experience of other national and international biomedical journals.

The edition and publication of this supplement is part of this experience, not only because of the articles, but also because it represents the end of a long process of education, research and reflection.