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EDITORIAL

Public Governance and Health Services: legacies of the pandemic and new directions for a more resilient system

Public governance plays a central role in facing contemporary health challenges, especially in a world marked by profound social, economic, and technological transformations[1]. On the global scenario, the COVID-19 pandemic has driven the creation of resilient health systems capable of responding quickly to crises and protecting vulnerable populations[2]. In the Brazilian context, effective public governance is crucial to ensure equitable and comprehensive access to health services, optimize resources, and strengthen policies that meet the demands of an ever-changing society[3]. In a post-pandemic world, with the intensification of the interdependence between countries and sectors, it is essential for governments to prioritize collaborative and sustainable strategies to provide public health and collective well-being.

Public governance can be understood as a set of processes, institutions, and practices that guide decision-making in the public sector, aiming at efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the management of resources and the provision of services[4,5]. In the health sector, this concept translates into the implementation of policies and strategies that seek to meet the needs of the population fairly and effectively. Well-structured, evidence-based decisions planned with broad social participation can significantly improve access to health services, expand their coverage, and ensure higher quality of care[6]. In addition, good governance favors integration between the different levels of management – federal, state, and municipal – and encourages the optimization of resources, reducing waste and strengthening the sustainability of the system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left deep and multifaceted legacies in the sector, highlighting weaknesses and driving structural changes. The overload of health systems was one of the main challenges faced, exposing the need to strengthen infrastructure, expand the workforce, and optimize resource management[7].

At the same time, the crisis accelerated digital transformation, consolidating the use of telemedicine, remote monitoring tools, and large-scale data analysis as pillars for the modernization of health services and their management[8,9]. The collective experience with the pandemic has significantly increased awareness of the importance of disease prevention, investment in immunization, and the role of public health in protecting populations[10]. These

teachings should serve as a foundation for strengthening more resilient and inclusive health systems in the future.

Financing the health sector represents one of the greatest challenges for public governance, requiring a balance between the growing demand for services and the limits imposed by fiscal sustainability[11,12]. In a context of scarce resources and broad needs, it is imperative that public managers adopt practices that ensure the efficient allocation of funds, prioritizing initiatives that generate greater social impact[13].

Strategic resource management, associated with the systematic fight against waste and corruption, is essential to expand the reach and quality of the services offered. In addition, it is necessary to create innovative financing mechanisms and strengthen tax collection progressively, ensuring that health policies are sustainable in the long term and inclusive, without compromising fiscal balance. In this way, public governance can contribute to a more robust and equitable health system, capable of meeting the demands of a society in constant transformation.

New technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), telemedicine, and big data analysis, have been consolidated as essential tools for strengthening health systems, allowing for more accurate diagnoses, personalized treatments, and more efficient management of resources[14].

In order to fully exploit these innovations, public policies must be inclusive, ensuring equitable access to technologies, training of professionals, and protection of patient data, so that technological advances benefit the entire population, reducing inequalities, strengthening equity, and increasing the efficiency of health systems.

Disparities in access to health services remain one of the greatest challenges for public governance, especially in countries with deep social inequalities. While urban and higher-income populations often have access to quality services, vulnerable communities — such as residents of rural, peripheral areas or historically neglected regions — face barriers ranging from lack of infrastructure to a shortage of up-to-date professionals[15].

In this scenario, public governance must assume a strategic and active role, formulating policies that guarantee equal access and the expansion of coverage for those most in need. Investments in primary care, the Family Health Strategy and intersectoral partnerships are essential, as well as the strengthening of social participation in the management of resources and definition of priorities. More than an administrative obligation, the construction of a fair and accessible health system reflects an ethical commitment of the State to the reduction of inequalities and the search for collective well-being.

Cooperation between the municipal, state, and federal governments is essential for the implementation of public health policies that effectively meet the needs of the population, ensuring the integration of resources, competencies, and strategies[16]. However, political obstacles such as political party disputes, lack of intergovernmental integration, and divergences in priorities often compromise efficient articulation, resulting in overlapping actions or gaps in care[17]. Overcoming these challenges requires public governance based on transparency, dialogue, and collective commitment, in which the public interest prevails over individual political interests, with a more assertive and equitable management of the health system.

Facing the challenges of public governance and health is necessary, as it will require an integrated approach that goes beyond the exclusive action of the State, operating partnerships between governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations. Also, civil society has a crucial role in oversight, monitoring policies and articulating demands, ensuring that actions are transparent and aligned with the real needs of the population.

The private sector, in turn, can contribute with technological innovation, financing and expertise, as long as it is under a regulation that ensures probity and avoids commodification. International organizations can offer technical, financial and strategic support for the sharing of global best practices. This collaborative vision is key to building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable health systems.

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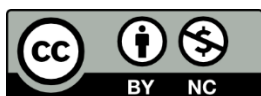
Good Reading!

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