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Contemporary Challenges of Brazilian Public Health: State, Society, and Care Policies

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Abstract

Brazilian public health is characterized by significant social diversity, regional heterogeneity, and continuous efforts to promote equitable access to healthcare. This integrative study brings together evidence from five complementary investigations focusing on vaccine hesitancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), mental health among healthcare workers, reproductive health and contraceptive access, and public perceptions of the Unified Health System (SUS). Collectively, these studies explore how social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors influence health outcomes and healthcare experiences across different populations in Brazil.

Using diverse methodological approaches, including cross-sectional studies, ecological time-series analyses, mixed-methods research, and qualitative inquiry, the investigations identify important trends and challenges in contemporary public health. Research on vaccine hesitancy among caregivers in São Paulo highlights the role of information sources, cultural beliefs, religious perspectives, gender-related factors, and socioeconomic conditions in shaping childhood immunization decisions. Analysis of national STI trends demonstrates the ongoing relevance of syphilis, HIV, and viral hepatitis as public health concerns, particularly among young adults and specific demographic groups, reinforcing the importance of prevention, early diagnosis, and access to treatment.

In the area of occupational health, nursing professionals in the post-pandemic context report substantial psychological and emotional demands, including anxiety, sleep disturbances, fatigue, and depressive symptoms. These findings underscore the need for strategies that support workforce well-being and resilience. Similarly, the reproductive health study conducted in Pernambuco identifies differences in access to intrauterine devices associated with educational attainment, income, race, and perceptions regarding contraceptive safety, highlighting opportunities to strengthen reproductive healthcare services and health education initiatives.

At the health system level, qualitative analysis of the SUS examines how political, economic, and cultural perspectives shape public perceptions of universal healthcare. The findings suggest that individual experiences, social values, and expectations regarding the role of the State contribute to diverse understandings of the SUS and its place within Brazilian society.

Taken together, these studies illustrate the multifaceted nature of contemporary public health challenges in Brazil and the complex interactions between social conditions, cultural contexts, and institutional arrangements. Addressing these issues requires integrated public policies that promote health equity, strengthen health communication, support healthcare workers, expand reproductive health opportunities, and reinforce the principles of universal access and social protection that underpin the Brazilian health system.