

**Promoting health through radio waves: a proposal for an interdisciplinary practice by the Project "Megaphone"**

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**Abstract**

Sound information is nowadays a materiality capable of propagate studies and researches carried out in different fields of knowledge. From that comprehension the Extension Project "Megaphone: loud and clear health" was structured, a partnership between the undergraduate Journalism course and Masters in Health Promotion, developed in the University Center Cesumar (UniCesumar). Focusing on the concern about communicating science with social commitment, radio products specially related with health promotion were elaborated and broadcasted by Unicesumar University Radio (RUC FM 94,3). The result was an enhancement in the capacity of the involved students to elaborate scientific dissemination and the group contribution to the accomplishment by the radio broadcaster of its main objective, the dissemination of the information with focus on the cultural upgrading of the population from the North-Western region of the state of Paraná.

## **Introduction**

Brazilian university radios receive operating authorization through approval by the Ministry of Communication. This approval is accompanied by the determination that the radio broadcaster should be compromised with the dissemination of programs that stimulate the development of culture, arts and citizenship, mainly facing regional issues. Therefore, a public commitment is assumed in the sense of managing the broadcaster contents, since the approval does not attribute ownership of the electromagnetic spectrum, but authorizes a company or an institution to use the frequency. In the case of Cesumar FM Radio, subject of this article, it is determined the dissemination of educational content, with deep social commitment. This is the premise that links this study with public communication.

Thus, by holding the frequency 94,3 of the radio spectrum, the University Center of Maringá (UniCesumar) also assumed the responsibility of using the UniCesumar University Radio (RUC FM) as a vehicle that aims to construct knowledge through radio dissemination.

This is also the commitment of the Extension Project “Megaphone: loud and clear health”, developed throughout the years of 2012 and 2013 in the Radio of the University Center of Maringá, RUC FM. The proposal was communicating science as an educational strategy of the Cesumar University FM Radio by broadcasting sound products developed by the undergraduate students of the Journalism course and the students of Masters in Health Promotion.

For two years the Megaphone Extension Project proposed the production of informative programs which interviewed the students of Masters in Health Promotion as a research source. Considering their experience in the area, the students acted as health consultants to the content to be developed in undergraduate projects. In other words, Masters students were allowed to contribute with health promotion, acting over its structural basis, education and communication, reason of existence of the radio, which, as highlighted above, has public imprint and commitment with the education through social communication.

### **Health literacy**

Nevertheless, the partnership between under graduation and *stricto sensu* graduation is not justified in RUC FM - fantasy name given to the Radio by its first interns - only by the aspects mentioned above. Each day makes clear that health comprises many dimensions, all deriving from complex relationships between physical, psychological and social aspects of human nature. Medicine and disease treatment system do not fully accomplish a life quality improvement to the individual, even if we consider the astonishing development of ultra-sophisticated techniques and drugs to treat the most varied pathologies. Capra (1982) states that, even though extremely useful in individual emergencies, biomedical interventions have limited effect over population health as a whole. The researcher highlights that human health is more connected with behavior, nourishment and the environment's condition and nature. He complements stating that the causes of health crises are strongly related to crises of social and cultural nature.

This is the atmosphere that appeals to professionals from all health areas since the Alma Ata Conference, organized by the World Health Organization in 1979. This event will result in the dissemination of health promotion area, which preaches the importance of equipping the individual with information, so that he might become the most influential piece in his own life quality. This is where the doctrine of health primary care is configured and legitimized in Brazil and worldwide, and it grew in answer to political and pragmatic interests of disease prevention.

This new philosophy was consolidated in Brazil in the decade of 1980, when social movements were strongly reborn, in an attempt to minimize the social cost of the military period in the country. It is in this moment that Journalism enhances its importance in the society and even the State acts in favor to social changes, which are confirmed by the passage of a new National Constitution. This new Magna Carta contains the draft of the United Health System (SUS) which, in its essence, aims to implement a new model of public health politics that certifies the importance of knowledge dissemination.

### **The public of Science and Health**

A research ordered by the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology revealed in 2006 shows that the journalist is the professional which holds the highest credibility when the subject is science and technology, followed by medical doctors and, just then, the scientist himself. Therefore, actions directed to the strengthening of the trusting image of society's health Journalism may reflect in its indicators of the general welfare of the population. Numbers show that the theme health draws the attention of people worldwide. A North American study from 2008 placed reports about this theme in the sixth place in public preference. News published in the journal *O Globo* in January 2011 showed data from a research made by *Bupa Health Pulse*, which surveyed more than 12 thousand people in Austrália, Brazil, United Kingdom, China, France, Germany, India, Mexico, Russia, Spain and United States. This survey revealed that 81% of people who have internet access use the net to obtain health orientation, medicine or information about medical conditions. Brazil is the fifth country with the higher search for health orientation in internet, according to the survey.

In a public opinion survey made by Gallup Institute of Public Opinion in 1987 by the order of the National Council of Scientific and Technologic Development (CNPq), entitled "What do Brazilians think about science and technology?" indicated the positive image and the Brazilian society's expectations about science and technology, more specifically concerning the achievements in different fields of knowledge, but specially about health information.

The same survey was remade and published in May 2007, with data collected between November and December 2006. This one was performed by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT) in a partnership with the Brazilian Science Academy, the Osvaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), and counted with the collaboration of the Laboratory of Advanced Studies in Journalism (Lajor/Unicamp) and the support of the Foundation for Research Support of the State of São Paulo (Fapesp). A total of 2004 persons with average age of 36 years were interviewed throughout the country. The results show that Brazilians prefer the subjects of Science than Politics and, once more, the preferred themes are health and medicine (60%) and environment (58%). The same survey was

performed in 2010 and the only change was in the fact that Brazilians showed higher interest in environmental subjects, which appeared tied with health and medicine.

### **Masters in Health Promotion**

The questions above directed the participation of the students of the discipline “Media, Culture and Society”, from Masters at Health Promotion at UniCesumar during their participation in the Project Megaphone. The class was coordinated by Prof. Dra. Ana Paula Machado Velho and was composed by six students.

Initially, theoretical questions were approached in the classroom, concerning the relation between culture and communication, the concept of “media” and its categorization in supports and formats, and also media and society. It was discussed the cultural concept of health in contemporary society from the perspective of media, the relationship of education and communication with the media – from the concepts of “media”, “education” and “edukommunikation” – to, then, approaching more specific question as scientific dissemination and “Health Communication”.

Thus, the students have been capacitated to become sources to reports in several programs from Radio RUC FM, especially those connected to the Extension Project Megaphone, all executed by the undergraduate students of the Journalism course at UniCesumar. Journalism students went to the Masters classroom to meet the students and interview them. The agenda was offered by the Masters students, starting from their area of operation. There was a moment for the groups to know each other and then the first information exchange took place. After this meeting, the contact between “journalists” and “sources” happened without interference of teachers and it was established by telephone or email, to schedule the interviews.

Masters students’ final task was to produce media material to the Radio RUC FM. The students wrote the agenda and performed interviews in pairs. The development of the reports was supported by a class in which the students listened to dozens of journalistic audio files and then they wrote the scripts for editing and the decoupage of the interviews.

Ana Paula Serra de Araújo and Maria Cecília Begnossi produced “Elderly Caregivers”; Bárbara Magalhães Barros Arco-Verde and Francis Keila Fernanda Nanci

Grillo produced “Family against Smoking” and José Carlos Barbieri and Guido Luís Gomes Otto produced “The Importance of Drinking Water”.

### **Civic Journalism**

The undergraduate students from the course of Social Communication with qualification in Journalism were encouraged, by the Prof. Vinícius Durval Dorne, to participate of the project. The concept of Public Journalism was considered to subsidize the work in health communication, aiming to establish an actual path between the journalistic institution and the society, as well the scientific Journalism. Such daily practice offered the undergraduate students the opportunity to expand their practical experiences developed in disciplines such as “Radiophonic Language”, “Radiojournalism” and “New Trades in Journalism”, and allowed the Masters students to reflect about the overlapping between media, culture and society.

The reflection brought by the journal *Civic Journalism* was of paramount importance to the development of the project. It is based on the presupposition that media has the civic duty of performing much more than simply relate daily facts which supposedly interest the collectivity; it is necessary to get involved in actions that aim to contribute to the improvement of life quality in the community where it is inserted. As emphasized by FERNANDES (2008), Journalism is bound to develop actions that stimulate “the development of media for the local communities in the search of solutions to collective problems [...]” (p. 10).

In this sense, media comes out of the scope of simple denouncement to expand its presence, converting itself to an active subject, recognized and legitimated by society itself, narrowing the bonds between press and communities in common objectives and projects. Hence, journalists must take their personal and professional knowledge inside their contents, aiming to stimulate the formation of a public concerned about public/social causes and questions, in other words, contribute to elaborate a public sphere, decentralizing the traditional process of communication (one-way) broadcaster-message/channel-receptor (FERNANDES, 2008).

Thus, a group of 12 students from the first to the fourth year of the undergraduate Journalims course produced a program in a radio magazine format, the “RUC Magazine”.

The program counted with elaboration acts, interviews and reports about health to compose its script, and also with other themes like “culture”, “sports” and “economy” etc.

In addition to this production, fourth year students also elaborated two specific radio products directed to the Extension Project: the weekly program Pulsation, with duration of 20 minutes; and the Moment Pulsation, information capsules (small programs) with duration of 2 to 3 minutes, about Health Promotion, which were broadcasted right after the RUC FM daily schedule.

The program “Pulsation” articulated interviews, reports, tables and news specifically about the health scope: from prevention to the last scientific discoveries of a field, and mainly about studies performed by the Masters students of “Health Promotion”. Supervised by Prof. M.Sc. Vinícius Durval Dorne in the bosom of the discipline “New Trades in Journalism”, the program aimed to stimulate students to the professional practice compromised with the society through reflection about Scientific, Community, Public and alternative Journalism, amongst others.

### **In pursuit of the objectives**

The Extension Project not only put to practice the social role of Journalism of establishing an actual path between the journalistic institution and the society, spreading subjects capable of promote consciousness to the population in what refers to health care as a whole. Throughout this study it was observed that the experience acquired by the students when developing journalistic products enhanced their interest in the teaching-learning process, in undergraduate and graduate levels. It is noteworthy such importance, once the students are not concerned only with obtaining grades in disciplines that integrate the Project, but also demonstrate concern about the possibility of getting public feedback, which goes beyond the limits of the institution, providing quality in radio content and aesthetic.

Besides, it is considered that students are not the only ones benefited by this process. The population from the city of Maringá and its surroundings has access to important discussions, especially about health, that might have considerable effect in

their daily lives. And all that provided by different sources as radio newspapers, radio magazines, small programs and bulletins, which have the final goal of promoting health.

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