



Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences in the SUS in São Paulo state

Fonoaudiologia no Sistema Único de Saúde do Estado de São Paulo

Fonoaudiología en el Sistema Único de Salud (SUS) del Estado de Sao Paulo

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Abstract

The SUS is an achievement of the Brazilian people and has brought a new paradigm of health, changing focus from the disease to the subject and its context, which led to reorganization of the health system and reflection on the training of professionals in the area. The Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences is in process of identifying construction to act in the public health system, since it is a profession with recent regulation, around 30 years, still expanding. In this way, it is important discussing about professional sizing within Brazilian Unified Health System. The São Paulo state concentrates the largest number of Speech, Language and Hearing professionals and undergraduate courses. In this panorama, the interest arises in researching the distribution of those professionals in the SUS of the São Paulo state to understand the inclusion of this category in the public health service. Secondary data were analyzed from the public information banks of the Brazilian Ministry of Health and Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics regarding the size of the cities in São Paulo and the number of Speech, Language and Hearing professionals working in SUS in each of them. It is possible to observe that there is no logical in professional distribution, with an inversely proportional relation between the size of the cities and the number of professionals working in the public health system. The professional sizing can be an important instrument for improving the organization of those professionals's offer to population.

Keywords: Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences; Unified Health System; Health Care (Public Health); Primary Health Care

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Authors' contributions:

CLN: responsible for data collection, result analysis and preparation of the article.

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Resumo

O SUS é uma conquista do povo brasileiro e trouxe com a sua criação um novo paradigma de saúde, deslocando o olhar da doença para o sujeito e seu contexto, que levou à reorganização do sistema de saúde, e a uma reflexão sobre a formação dos profissionais da área. A Fonoaudiologia está em processo de construção da sua identidade para atuação no sistema público de saúde, uma vez que é uma profissão com regulamentação recente, por volta de 30 anos, ainda em expansão. Dessa forma, é de grande importância a discussão sobre o dimensionamento dos profissionais dessa categoria dentro do SUS. O Estado de São Paulo concentra o maior número de profissionais de Fonoaudiologia e de cursos de graduação na área. Neste panorama surge o interesse em pesquisar a distribuição de profissionais de Fonoaudiologia no SUS do Estado de São Paulo para compreender a inserção desta categoria no serviço público. Foram analisados dados secundários dos bancos de informações públicos do Ministério da Saúde e do IBGE relativos ao porte dos municípios paulistas e ao número de profissionais de Fonoaudiologia atuando no SUS em cada um deles. É possível observar que não há lógica na distribuição dos profissionais, havendo relação inversamente proporcional entre o porte dos municípios e o número de fonoaudiólogos atuando no sistema público de saúde. O dimensionamento de profissionais de Fonoaudiologia pode ser instrumento importante para melhora na organização da oferta destes profissionais para a população.

Palavras-chave: Fonoaudiologia; Sistema Único de Saúde; Atenção à Saúde; Atenção Primária à Saúde

Resumen

El SUS es una conquista del pueblo brasileiro y trajo con su creación un nuevo paradigma de salud, desplazando la visión de la enfermedad para el sujeto y su contexto, que resultó en una reorganización del sistema de salud y en una reflexión sobre la formación de profesionales. La Fonoaudiología está en proceso de construcción de su identidad para la actuación en el sistema público de salud, una vez que es una profesión con reglamentación reciente, mas o menos 30 años, y todavía en expansión. Así, es de gran valor la discusión sobre la importancia de los profesionales de esta área dentro del SUS. El estado de São Paulo concentra el mayor número de profesionales de Fonoaudiología y de cursos de graduación en esta área. En este panorama surge interés en investigar la distribución de profesionales de Fonoaudiología en el SUS del estado de São Paulo para comprender la inserción de esta categoría en el servicio público. Fueron analizados datos secundarios de las bases de informaciones públicas del Ministerio de Salud y del IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografía y Estadística) relacionados al porte de los municipios paulistas y al número de profesionales de Fonoaudiología actuando en el SUS en cada uno de estos. Es posible observar que no existe lógica en la distribución de los profesionales, habiendo relación inversamente proporcional entre el porte de los municipios y el número de fonoaudiólogos actuando en el sistema público de salud. La reflexión sobre la importancia de los profesionales de Fonoaudiología puede ser un instrumento importante para mejorar la organización de la oferta de estos profesionales para la población.

Palabras claves: Fonoaudiología; Sistema Único de Salud; Atención a la Salud; Atención Primaria de Salud

Introduction

The SUS is an achievement of the Brazilian people and has brought a new paradigm of health, finalistic and strategic principles that indicate the democratization in the actions and health services: decentralized and universal. This new paradigm is changing focus from the disease to the subject and its context, which led to reorganization of the health

system and reflection on the training of professionals in the area.¹⁻³

The introduction of the Speech-Language Pathology is a recent construction that is full of challenges⁴⁻⁹. The distribution of healthcare professionals at different levels of complexity of care has been discussed in some studies. In speech-language pathology, the studies present a scarcity of professionals compared to the demand, despite the growth due to the inclusion of the category in the SUS.¹⁰⁻¹³



To date, there is still no indication by professional associations in speech-language pathology with respect to professional sizing, which impacts on the provision of the required services and on the proper insertion of professionals in each location.

Since the beginning, the story of this profession provides a rehabilitation and outpatient nature^{14,15} and, despite significant changes in the healthcare background in the country and in the world, this nature has consequences on the identity of the speech-language pathologist.

The changes generated by the implementation of the SUS in the early 90s led to the reorganization of the healthcare system and to a reflection on the training of professionals, with discussions on the importance of interdisciplinary teams for a broader and more qualified care for each user and their surroundings. At that moment, the speech-language pathology was in the first years of its regulation as a profession (Law no. 6965/1981) and the first undergraduate courses in the area were focused on the skills of the new profession. The regulation of the profession provides a broader panorama of performance, since the professions that preceded the speech-language pathology, such as phoniatrics, had a narrower nature, thus involving only corrective techniques in the communication field.

The current situation of public health policies, such as the creation of Family Health Support Centers, in 2008, has favored the expansion of the actions with respect to the speech-language pathology in the SUS; however, the effective insertion of speech-language pathology on the system depends of several factors, such as professional training and mobilization and coordination of the professional associations of the category, in addition to the involvement of professional^{10,11,16,17}.

For some time, the public health system in Brazil is focusing on reflections and changes, from the reformulation of the healthcare concept to institutional restructuring and skills reassignments. The reforms in the training of healthcare professionals have not kept up the pace of the changes proposed until now, thus presenting inconsistencies with the new conception of healthcare in force, such as fragmented formation, medical-centered organization and focus on the technical aspects of healthcare^{4,18-23}.

Despite the inclusion of Public Health in the study in undergraduate programs in Speech-Language Pathology and in the guidance of the

National Curricular Guidelines (DCN), from 2002, for the training of professionals who should be able to act with quality, efficiency and efficaciousness in the SUS, developing prevention, promotion, protection and rehabilitation measures with respect to health, both in individual and collective level, in their professional practice, the speech-language pathologist is still characterized by the development of *trainings that are limited, not sequential and predominantly technical*.²⁴ Thus, there is a movement towards the discussion of DCN with respect to training courses, so that there is a greater adaptation to current public policies, from the 2014 review of the DCN of the Medicine course, which provides a higher approach with the primary care since the beginning of the course and focuses on a more generalist training.

In this scenario, regulations on the appropriate sizing of speech-language pathology professionals in the SUS are required to allow the full ability of the speech-language pathology activities to meet the needs of the population.

The discussion on healthcare professional sizing is still embryonic in most professions, while nursing is the category which presents further discussion and a current regulation in force. Bonfim²⁵ carried out a study in which he used an instrument in order to identify the workload of nursing professionals within Primary Care Units with Family Health Strategy to support the planning for the Nursing workforce in this context. Based on the results of this work, Brazil's Federal Council of Nursing regulated the professional sizing for this field, as well as in other fields of the profession.²⁶

In Campinas, for a Speech-Language Pathology Protocol that arranges the flows in the field with descriptions of services and general information for referral to care in the municipality.²⁷

In a work based on epidemiological studies of Dentistry, Lessa and Miranda²⁸ presented a sizing proposal for the category, which indicates the need of a speech-language pathology for every 10,000 (ten thousands) people in primary care. According to the authors, the parameters of the sizing proposal are not consensus for the management of public services, which are indispensable actors for the proper insertion and distribution of professionals.

The authors also present criteria that can be used for a sizing calculation in speech-language pathology in public health. The first criterion is the installed capacity, which is based on the need

of a professional for speech-language pathology and another for audiology per shift; the second is the completeness, which takes into account the presence of professionals from fields related to speech-language pathology, indicating that there is a need of a speech-language pathologist in the work of these professionals; another criterion is need of speech-language pathologists in every healthcare and/or specialized service program, since users presenting issues related to communication could be assisted in all these fields of expertise and work, in addition to the insertion at the outpatient and hospital levels.

Lessa and Miranda²⁸ also reinforce the importance of the use of epidemiological data that are already available in the public health information systems in order to support studies on professional sizing of speech-language pathologists, establishing consistent parameters of demand in each location.

The interest in mapping the professionals emerged in view of the diversity of the municipalities in the state of São Paulo and of the great concentration of speech-language pathologists, presenting significant challenges for the organization

of the healthcare network, in order to understand the integration of speech-language pathologists in the SUS.

Secondary data was analyzed from a descriptive study that was carried out with the public domain data from the National Registry of Health Facilities (CNES) - which was a basis for operationalizing the Health Information Systems, providing data to support the management of SUS and of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), using 2017 as reference period. This analysis provided files processed by the TABNET software, from the IT Department of the Ministry of Health, which were then organized into excel spreadsheets to classify the information and to generate charts and graphs.

In order to sort the municipalities in the state of São Paulo by population size, according to the IBGE, they have been aggregated as shown in Table 1. Still on Table 1, it is possible to notice see that there are a significantly higher number of small municipalities in the state of São Paulo, corresponding to more than half of the municipalities in the state with up to 20,000 people.

Table 1. Classification of municipalities, according to the size of the population and the number of municipalities in each state.

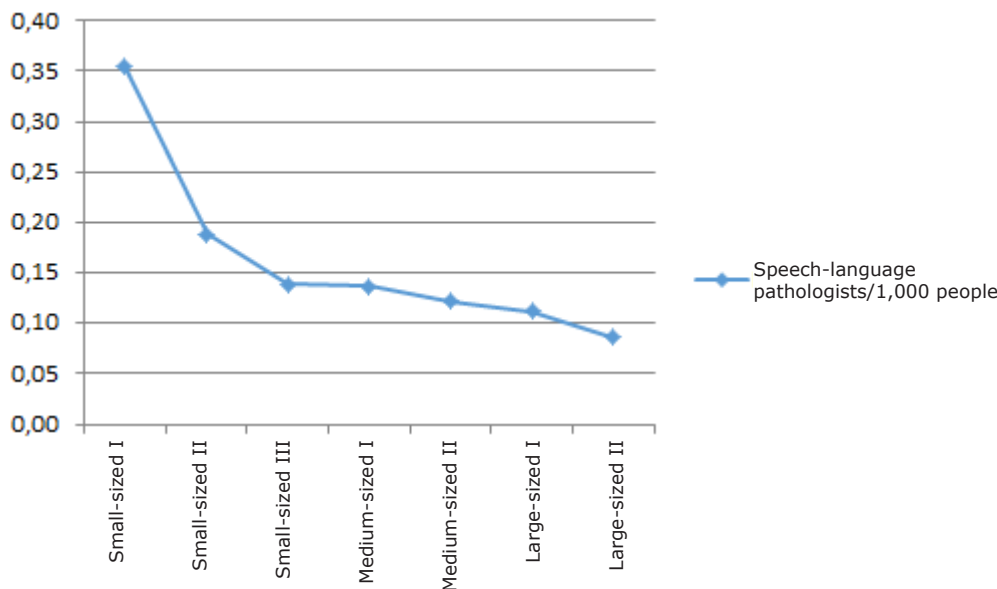
Size of the municipalities in the State of São Paulo (IBGE)	Quantity	Percentage
SMALL-SIZED		
I (up to 5,000 people)	157	24%
II (5,001 to 10,000 people)	122	19%
III (10,001 to 20,000 people)	122	19%
MEDIUM-SIZED		
I (20,001 to 50,000 people)	120	19%
II (50,001 to 100,000 people)	49	8%
I (100,001 to 500,000 people)	66	10%
LARGE-SIZED		
II (over 500,001 people)	9	1%
Overall	645	100%

Data for January/2017

A great discrepancy with an inversely proportional relation was found when analyzing the number of speech-language pathologists for every thousand people, which means that the larger the city, the smaller the number of speech-language pathologists in Public Health system, as shown in Chart 1.

Lourdes, a small-sized I municipality, presented the largest ratio of speech-language pathologists for every thousand people (1.41), while Jandira, a large-sized I municipality, presented the lowest ratio (0.02).

Chart 1. Relationship between the number of speech-language pathologists for every thousand people in public health and population size of municipalities



Data for January/2017

Data on the presence of speech-language pathologists in the municipalities of São Paulo show that all municipalities with more than 50,000 people have speech-language pathologists working in the SUS. The vast majority of municipalities between 5,000-50,000 people have speech-language pathologists in public health and regarding only municipalities with up to 5,000 people, less than half of them have speech-language pathologists among the professionals who work at SUS.

A preliminary survey concerning speech-language pathologists in the SUS in the state of São Paulo, with filters manually created in Excel – namely: link to SUS and primary care allocation –, based on a database from the DataSUS in August 2016, showed that almost 56% of the 645 municipalities of São Paulo have speech-language pathologists focused in primary care in the health-care framework.

Considerations

The lack of a proper sizing implies important limitations in the performance of speech-language pathologists in the SUS, such as the impossibility to conduct proper actions with respect to health

policies due to the excessive demand for clinical care. There may even be an impact on the identity of these professionals, who are under pressure for what they should do and for what they need to do and, as so, it impacts on their own health.

In addition, the poor distribution and lack of human resources in the field generate a negative impact on the image of the profession when compared to other professions and to the community in general, reinforcing the limited knowledge about the possibilities of the speech-language pathology.

The importance of setting parameters that could assist in the professional sizing of speech-language pathologists in the public health is then evidenced in view of the presented scenario. A resolution of the Federal Council of Speech-Language Pathology in Brazil addresses assistance parameters, based on the definition of times and number of procedures, which can be an important variable in the professional sizing of the category, as well as the expertise from other professional categories.²⁹

Another document of the Ministry of Health discusses parameters for the planning and programming of health actions and services within the scope of SUS. Therefore, it sets up a proposal for a new logic to establish the parameters of care for health needs, with elements to estimate the supply

of set of actions and services to *mitigate risks, diseases, clinical conditions or diseases of population groups*.³⁰ Discussions on the professional sizing of healthcare professionals, in particular speech-language pathologists, should be deepened to meet the needs of the population and to organize healthcare measures.

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