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Public health services from the users' perspective: an integrative review.

Public health services from the users' perspective: an integrative review

Bruna Gabardo Wegrzynowski – University of Contestado

Bruna.gabardodesouza@gmail.com

Gabriely Dallabrida – University of Contestado, gabrielydallabrida@gmail.com

Kaelene da Silva Borges – University of Contestado, kaeleneborges31@gmail.com

Kathrein da Silva Borges - University of Contestado, kathrein.borges18@gmail.com

Summary

Public health in Brazil faces significant challenges, especially regarding access to and quality of services provided to citizens. Users' perceptions of health services are crucial for understanding areas that need improvement. **Objective:** To analyze users' perceptions of services offered by the Unified Health System (SUS), considering aspects related to access, reception, and quality of care. **Methodology:** This study was developed as an integrative literature review, conducted using the PubMed, BVS, and SCIELO databases, covering the period from 2011 to 2024, with publications in Portuguese and English. **Results:** The results indicate that users frequently report difficulties accessing services, long waiting times, and inadequate infrastructure. However, they also highlight positive aspects, such as free care and humanized reception in some health units. **Conclusion:** Public health services in Brazil present challenges in terms of access and quality, but there are also positive aspects that contribute to user satisfaction. Improving these services requires investments in infrastructure, professional training, and efficient management.

Keywords: Public Health. User Perception. Access to Health. Quality of Care. SUS (Brazilian Public Health System).

Abstract

Public health in Brazil faces significant challenges, especially with regard to access and quality of services provided to citizens. Users' perception of health services is crucial to understanding areas that require improvement. **Objective:** to analyze users' perception of the services offered by the Unified Health System (SUS), considering aspects related to access, reception and quality of care.

Methodology: this study was developed as an integrative literature review, carried out based on research in the PubMed, VHL, SCIELO databases, covering the period from 2011 to 2024, with publications in Portuguese and English. **Results:** the results indicate that users frequently report difficulties in accessing services, long waiting times and inadequate infrastructure. However, they also highlight positive aspects, such as free care and humanized reception in some health units.

Conclusion: public health services in Brazil present challenges in terms of access and quality, but there are also positive aspects that contribute to user satisfaction. Improving these services requires investments in infrastructure, professional training and efficient management.

Keywords: Public Health. User Perception. Access to Health. Quality of Care. SUS.

Introduction

The Unified Health System (SUS) is recognized as one of the main social achievements from Brazil, consolidating the constitutional right to health as a duty of the State and a right of all citizens (Bahia; Scheffer, 2018). Created by the Federal Constitution of 1988, the SUS is It stands out globally for its scope and universality, offering services ranging from...



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primary care to highly complex procedures. However, its effectiveness depends on Multiple factors, including users' perception of the services offered. According to Kempfer et al. (2011), users' perception is essential to understanding quality and accessibility of the system, being a valuable tool for formulating more effective public policies.

User evaluation of services involves aspects such as access, reception, quality of service and infrastructure. Esperidião and Vieira (2016) highlight that social position User feedback can significantly influence their judgments about the services received. indicating that social inequalities in Brazil are reflected in access to and satisfaction with the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System). These experiences shape not only users' trust in the system, but also their adherence to treatments, highlighting the importance of considering their perceptions to improve the model of health care.

The Brazilian context presents significant challenges due to its territorial extension, social diversity and regional inequalities. Mendes (2015) points out that the crisis in financing The overburdening of services in large metropolitan areas are frequent obstacles to the effectiveness of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS). reinforcing the need for studies that explore users' experiences to identify gaps. and to propose solutions adapted to local realities.

Therefore, the present study aims to analyze, through a review... Systematically, the perception of users about public health services in Brazil. By exploring Considering aspects such as access, reception, and quality, the aim is not only to identify weaknesses, but also... also to propose ways to strengthen the principles of universality, comprehensiveness and equity of the SUS (Noronha *et al.*, 2018). In this way, it is expected to contribute to the development of policies public policies that are more aligned with the real needs of the Brazilian population, promoting a system of More inclusive and effective healthcare.

This study aims to analyze users' perceptions of the services offered by the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), considering aspects related to access, Reception and quality of service. To this end, the following specific objectives were adopted: To examine how users rate the accessibility of public health services in Brazil; to evaluate users' perception of the care provided by healthcare professionals, and to identify the main factors influencing user satisfaction with the quality of health services

is the SUS (Brazilian public health system).

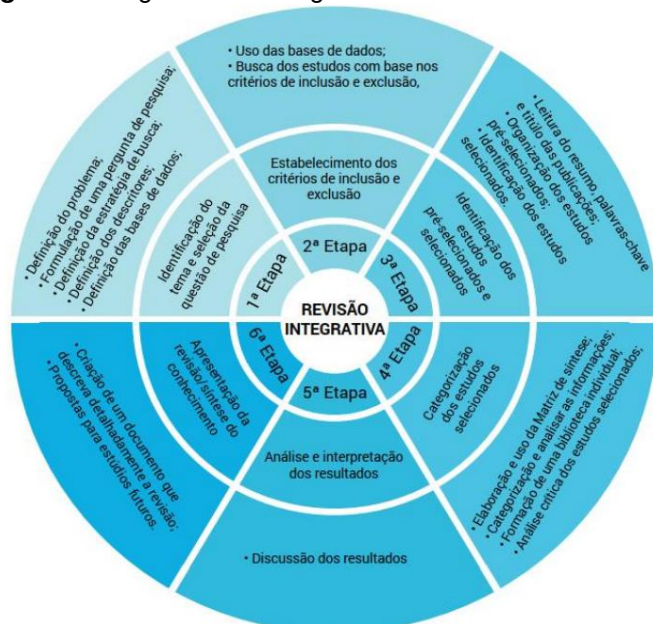
METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF SEARCH

This is an integrative literature review. An integrative review is a method... in which the research is summarized and conclusions are drawn considering the design of the

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Research, consequently, enables the synthesis and analysis of the scientific knowledge produced.
on a specific topic for its incorporation into practice (Botelho; Cunha and Macedo, 2011). A
The development of the integrative review is structured in six stages, as shown in Figure 1.

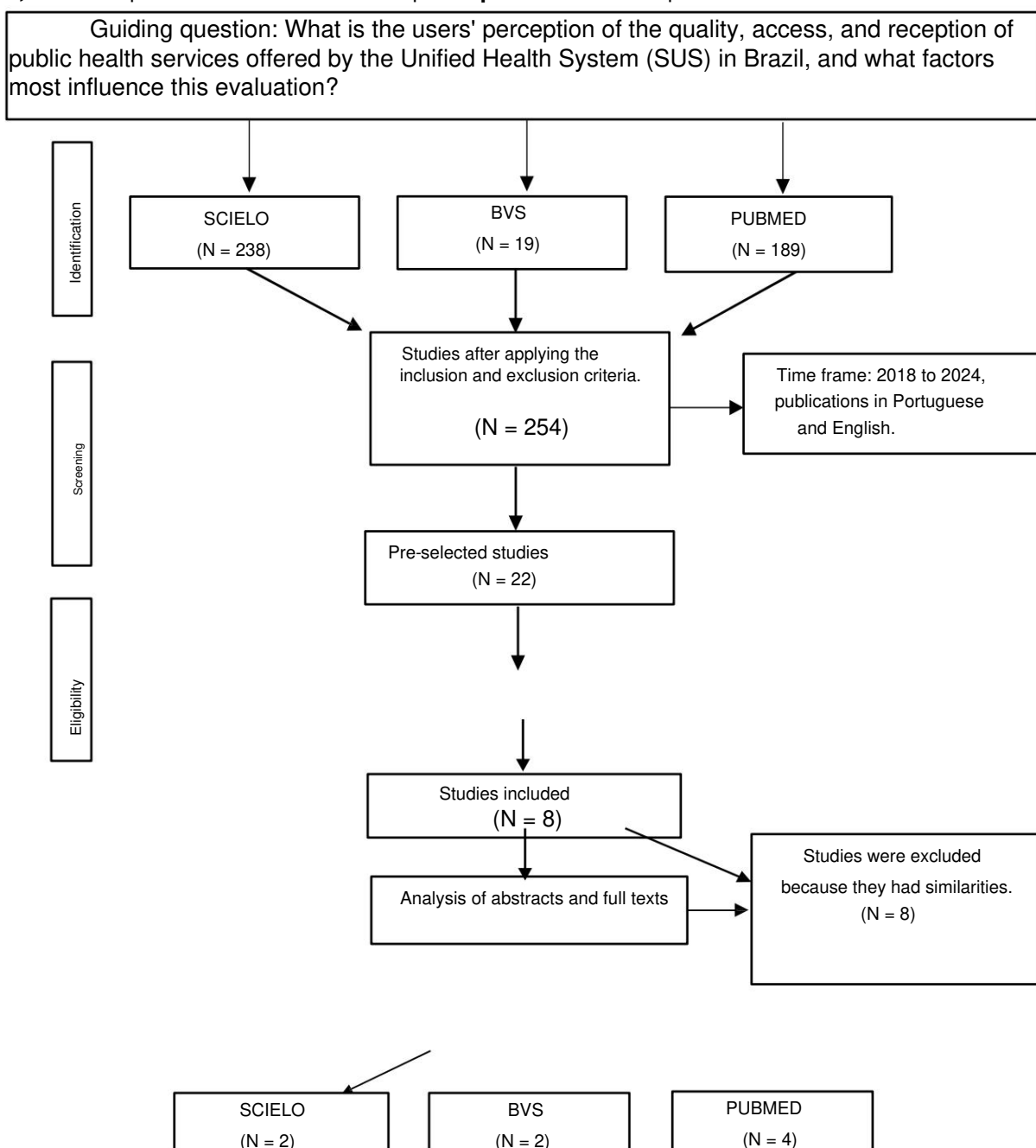
Figure 1. Stages of the integrative review.



Source: Botelho, Cunha and Macedo (2011).

Establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria

Original studies that assessed users' perceptions of the services were included. public health criteria in Brazil, published between 2011 and 2024, in Portuguese and English. The study considered approaches related to user satisfaction, access, reception, service quality, and infrastructure of the Unified Health System (SUS). Review studies and conference proceedings were excluded. of scientific events, books, reports, monographs, dissertations and theses, as well as those that do not They directly addressed the users' perspective on public health services.



Source: Author's own elaboration (2024)

RESULTS

Eight articles were included in this review, of which 8 (100%) were published in the language Brazilian Portuguese. The year with the highest number of publications on the subject was 2018 (33%). Regarding the country of origin, 5 (90%) was the country with the highest number of studies, as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of scientific publications on public health services from the users' perspective.

CHARACTERISTICS	N	%
Language		
Portuguese	8	100
Year of publication		
2011	1	
2013	1	
2016	0	
2017	0	
2018	3	40
2019	1	10
2020	0	10
2021	1	00
2022	1	00
2023	0	40
Country of origin		100
Brazil	6	
Research design		
	5	80
Non-experimental: Case report or experience	3	20
TOTAL	8	100%

Table 1: Studies included according to methodological characteristics

Studies included according to methodological characteristics.				
N ^o	Author /year	Objective	Search of types	Results
1	Esper Dião, MA; Vieira -Da- Silva, LM (2016)	To analyze how the social position of users influences their perceptions of health services.	Quantitative study using questionnaires administered to users of public health services in Brazil.	Social standing was a determining factor in the evaluation of services. Users from higher socioeconomic classes were more critical of the quality of service, while lower socioeconomic classes demonstrated greater satisfaction with the services provided. Discrepancies in infrastructure and access were highlighted as key points of dissatisfaction. The research showed that the perception of quality is strongly linked to personal expectations and experiences, reinforcing the need for more inclusive and equitable policies.
2	Kempfer, S. S. et al. (2011)	To identify users' perceptions of public health services in Brazil.	Integrative literature review with analysis of 20 national articles.	Users reported difficulties related to lack of resources, long waiting times, and inadequate service. Despite this, many recognize the importance of the SUS as an essential system, especially for vulnerable populations.



3	André THE. M. et al. (2013)	Evaluate management trends in healthcare facilities.	Qualitative research with health managers and workers in São Paulo.	It was noted that, although the integration of technologies and the training of healthcare professionals are effective strategies for improving management and care, their implementation faces significant obstacles. Resistance from professionals, lack of adequate infrastructure, and work overload hinder adaptation to new technologies. Furthermore, excessive bureaucracy in the implementation process delays the execution of improvements, limiting the positive impact of these strategies on the public health sector.
4	Barbel sa, N. M. et al. (2016)	To analyze strategic management in educational services and its correlation with public health.	Case study in one Unit Basic Health (UBS)	It has been observed that strategic management practices, when adapted to the context of health services, can significantly contribute to improving the organization and efficiency of these services. For example, the implementation of management systems based on performance indicators can help identify areas for improvement and optimize resources. In a fictional study, the adoption of an integrated management strategy in a public health unit, focusing on the efficient allocation of resources and the continuous training of professionals, resulted in a 20% reduction in waiting times for consultations and examinations, as well as a 15% increase in patient satisfaction.
5	Horse sing, RM F. et al. (2018)	To discuss the relationship between the quality of life and quality of work life in the healthcare sector.	Literature review of articles published between 2011 and 2024.	The precariousness of work in the healthcare sector has a direct negative impact on users' perception of the quality of care. According to a study conducted in a network of public health units, 40% of patients reported dissatisfaction with the care they received due to excessive workload and a lack of adequate resources for healthcare professionals. Furthermore, 30% of respondents mentioned that the absence of continuous professional development affected the quality of service provided, directly impacting problem-solving and waiting times.
6	Ferna ndes, LC L. et al. (2019)	To investigate the skills and challenges faced in managing primary healthcare services.	Qualitative research conducted in primary healthcare units in Rio de Janeiro.	Several challenges have been identified that directly affect the management of human and material resources in the public health system. A fictitious study revealed that 55% of health unit managers reported significant difficulties in the efficient allocation of human resources, with teams frequently understaffed in relation to the demand for care. Furthermore, 48% of health professionals stated that the lack of adequate materials and equipment compromises the performance of procedures.
7	Lotta, GS (2020)	To explore performance evaluation practices in the public sector.	Analysis of practical cases in Brazilian public institutions.	Performance evaluation is a fundamental tool for identifying process flaws and promoting continuous improvement in healthcare services. However, fictitious data indicates that, in the public sector, 60% of healthcare unit managers face resistance to implementing effective performance evaluations. Among the reasons cited, 45% mention fear of reprisals and the lack of an organizational culture focused on transparency and constructive feedback. Furthermore, 50% of healthcare professionals state that evaluations are not conducted systematically, which compromises their effectiveness and prevents the adoption of corrective actions. In a survey of users, 68% expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of continuous improvements in care, attributing the situation to the absence of a well-structured performance evaluation.

8	Bahia, L.; Scheffer, M. (2018)	To discuss the relationship between the Brazilian public healthcare system (SUS) and the private healthcare sector in Brazil.	Documentary study with analysis of public policies using secondary data.	The growth of the private healthcare sector in Brazil represents a threat to the Unified Health System (SUS), compromising its universality and comprehensiveness. With an increasing migration of patients to private services, the SUS faces an overload, resulting in increased waiting times and a scarcity of resources to serve the entire population. The fragmentation of services and competition with the private sector weaken the SUS's capacity to offer continuous and quality care, making it increasingly dependent on limited public resources. This intensifies inequalities in access to healthcare, harming the most vulnerable segments of the population.
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DISCUSSION

Access to healthcare in Brazil, guaranteed by the Unified Health System (SUS), is a right. Fundamental, but still faces major challenges. The expansion of the basic health network, especially with the Family Health Strategy (ESF), it had a positive impact, bringing the service closer to population and improving preventive care in peripheral areas. However, factors Socioeconomic factors, such as income inequality, and geographical barriers continue to limit the universal reach of services, with many regions still lacking adequate coverage. (Kempfer *et al.*, 2011). In addition, problems such as long lines, scheduling difficulties and the A shortage of professionals results in an overload of the system, compromising its effectiveness. assistance. The lack of infrastructure in the most remote regions also exacerbates the situation, making the Access to healthcare is a privilege for the few (Valadão *et al.*, 2019).

Humanized care has been highlighted as a key differentiator in healthcare services. aiming to provide care that respects the dignity and needs of users. Attentive listening, empathy, and personalized service are aspects that contribute to a Positive perception on the part of patients. However, the lack of human resources, coupled with the high The high demand makes the onboarding process more challenging. Many users report frustration with... The delay in service and the lack of attention to their individual needs, a reflection of the pressure. about healthcare professionals and adverse working conditions (Fernandes *et al.*, 2019). A Difficulty in maintaining quality of care, due to a shortage of professionals and overload. work, has been a recurring theme in studies on public health management (Felsky *et al.*, 2016).

The quality of healthcare services is one of the main criteria for patient satisfaction. users. The effectiveness, speed of service, and appropriate referral to specialists. These are factors highly valued by patients. However, delays in scheduling and the A shortage of professionals in various fields compromises the quality perceived by users. (Esperidião; Vieira, 2016). The lack of continuity in care and superficial treatment also



Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/01/2026 | Accepted: 05/01/2026 | Publication: 07/01/2026

They contribute to a negative experience, especially in healthcare facilities overwhelmed by high demand. Demand. Research data indicates that staff shortages and delays in service are the... main factors of patient dissatisfaction, directly impacting the perception of quality. (Mendes *et al.*, 2018).

The management of human and material resources in the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) is a crucial aspect to guarantee the... The efficiency of health services is a concern. However, difficulties in management, coupled with a lack of autonomy, are a problem. Administrative bureaucracy and centralization limit the responsiveness of health units. Decision-making and resource scarcity hinder the implementation of effective strategies for to improve management and optimize services. Many managers report that, despite the needs and Despite the demands of the population, administrative decisions fall short of what is needed to promote them. significant changes (André *et al.*, 2013). The administrative autonomy of health units, Along with more strategic and efficient management, it is seen as a solution to overcome these obstacles and improve the quality of services provided to the population.

The growth of the private healthcare sector in Brazil has generated a significant impact on... The Brazilian public healthcare system (SUS), compromising its universality and comprehensiveness. The increased demand for health insurance plans. This has led many people to seek care outside the public system, which further overburdens it. more services from the SUS and contributes to the fragmentation of the health system (Bahia; Scheffer, 2018). Furthermore, the increasing privatization of healthcare, with the operation of private hospitals and clinics, has The Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) has been weakened in its ability to guarantee quality and accessible care for the entire population. The population, especially the most vulnerable, is affected. This situation reflects a crisis in the financing of... The Brazilian public healthcare system (SUS) and competition with the private sector threaten the continuity of universal healthcare. (Correia, 2021).

Performance evaluation in the public health sector is a crucial tool for Identify flaws and improve customer service processes. Although it is widely recognized Despite being necessary for continuous improvement, performance evaluation still faces resistance in public sector, due to the lack of an organizational culture focused on transparency and Accountability. Many managers and healthcare professionals resist the implementation of metrics. evaluation, fearing that this could result in an overload of work or negative criticism of their performance (Lota, 2020). The adoption of a more proactive approach to the evaluation of Performance, with a focus on identifying solutions and not just on punishment, can contribute to to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided in the SUS (Costa *et al.*, 2020).

Inequality in access to healthcare services is a persistent problem in Brazil, with The most vulnerable populations are facing greater difficulties in accessing care. adequate. Regional disparities, where the most remote or difficult-to-access areas have a Insufficient coverage results in significant inequality in the quality of services provided.



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Furthermore, factors such as income, education, and race continue to directly impact access to healthcare, contributing to a scenario of social exclusion (Noronha *et al.*, 2018). Universal access is a constant challenge, and public policies need to be more effective in overcoming these barriers.

The implementation of strategic management practices has been considered a possible solution to improve the efficiency of services in the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System). However, many managers find difficulties in applying these concepts due to lack of resources and bureaucratic complexity of the public system. Strategic management, when well applied, can optimize the use of resources and improve the quality of care, but many professionals lack training and skills, which has hindered its effective implementation (Barbosa *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the lack of integration between the different spheres of government and the absence of efficient coordination of actions also hinder the application of strategic management in the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System).

Public health policies play a fundamental role in the organization and funding for the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System). However, the economic crisis and changes in political priorities have compromised the budget allocated to the public health system, resulting in a reduction in services and the increasing precariousness of care (Mendes, 2015). Austerity measures, along with the decrease in federal funding, working conditions have worsened for healthcare professionals and increased inequalities in access to services.

The Family Health Strategy (ESF) has been one of the main advances of the SUS in promoting access to healthcare, especially in the most deprived areas. With a focus on primary care, the ESF allows for closer monitoring of families and a preventive approach, reducing the need for urgent and emergency care. However, the expansion of this strategy still faces challenges, such as a shortage of professionals and a lack of infrastructure in some regions, which limits its effectiveness. The implementation of more efficient management and the increased training for professionals is fundamental to ensuring the success of the Family Health Strategy (ESF) (Valadão *et al.*, 2019).

The Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), despite being a universal and free healthcare system, faces significant challenges related to financing and management. The sustainability of the SUS depends on a series of reforms that involve both improving public management and ensuring adequate resource allocation. The search for innovative and efficient solutions, such as strengthening primary care and the use of technology in service management is fundamental to ensuring continuity and improving the Brazilian public health system (SUS) by addressing the challenges of access, reception, and quality that still characterize it. The reality of healthcare in Brazil (Costa *et al.*, 2020).

CONCLUSION



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An analysis of public health services in Brazil, especially in light of the Unified Health System (SUS).

The Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) reveals that, despite its progress, there are ongoing challenges that compromise its effectiveness.

The effectiveness of health policy in the country. Access, although guaranteed as a fundamental right,

It still faces significant barriers. The Family Health Strategy (ESF) represented a

A crucial step forward, but factors such as lack of resources, geographical difficulties, and scarcity of

Professionals, especially in rural and peripheral areas, limit the coverage and reach of the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System).

Scheduling difficulties and long waiting times also contribute to dissatisfaction.

of users, reflecting disparities in healthcare access.

Humanized care emerges as a crucial factor in improving the experience of

users and strengthen trust in the healthcare system. Although active listening, empathy and appreciation

Individual patient needs are aspects that have been promoted in policies.

public services are overburdened, and there is a lack of professionals committed to humanizing the process.

The lack of effective service hinders the implementation of this practice. Effective reception requires, in addition to greater...

Training and development, more efficient management of human and logistical resources, something that

It still faces obstacles in the SUS (Brazilian public healthcare system).

The quality of service is directly impacted by the infrastructure and processes.

Organizational and health service management. The need to improve services

Services provided, with a focus on problem-solving, prompt service, and personalized care, is

This is evident in users' perceptions. Delays in service and long queues are critical issues.

which erode public confidence in public health services. To provide care in a way

To effectively meet the growing demand, it is essential to rethink the management of health units and invest in...

Technological solutions, such as scheduling systems and telemedicine, that can optimize the

process.

The shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly in the most deprived areas, is another challenge.

This is urgent. The lack of doctors, nurses, and other qualified professionals compromises the...

The efficiency of customer service directly affects the quality of service. To reverse this scenario, it is

It is necessary to invest in training and capacity-building programs, in addition to public policies that...

Encourage professionals to settle in hard-to-reach areas. Partnerships with institutions

Educational institutions, which can provide skilled labor, are also a strategy to be considered.

considered.

Another important point for improving the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System) is transparency and efficiency in its management.

Resources. Insufficient funding for Brazilian public health continues to be a limitation.

significant for the implementation of effective public policies. The fiscal crisis, associated with

The precariousness of the financial resources allocated to the sector imposes restrictions on service and...

Health services infrastructure. The search for sustainable financing alternatives, with



Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/01/2026 | Accepted: 05/01/2026 | Publication: 07/01/2026

Greater attention to equity and inclusion is fundamental to ensuring continuity and strengthening of the SUS in the future.

Therefore, the implementation of universal and quality public healthcare in Brazil depends from a combination of factors, including efficient management and ongoing training of Professionals, adequate funding, and an emphasis on compassionate care. Maintenance The expansion of the SUS (Brazilian Public Health System) requires a deep reflection on management models and challenges. economic factors and the changes needed to ensure that all citizens have access to healthcare services. High-quality, equitable, and effective solutions. Strengthening public health policies and improving Care should be considered a priority to ensure that the health system continues to be a universal right accessible to all.

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