33 years of Post Graduate Programs at IMIP: a harvest of productivity fellowships and the next following steps

In September 2026, the *stricto sensu* post graduate program at the *Instituto de Medicina Integral Prof. Fernando Figueira* (IMIP) will celebrate its 33rd anniversary. In 1993, IMIP launched its first *stricto sensu* program, Master's in Maternal and Child Health, reflecting the historical identity of what was then the *Instituto Materno-Infantil de Pernambuco*. In 2006, as a result of its institutional consolidation and the recognition of its academic excellence by the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES) (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education), the Program expanded its scope with the creation of the Doctoral Program in Maternal and Child Health. Throughout its history, the Post Graduate Program at IMIP has expanded its scope with the creation of other Master's programs, including professional programs.

In 2013, upon celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Program was briefly highlighted by João Guilherme Bezerra Alves in an editorial in this journal, which noted the graduation of hundreds of Master's and Doctoral students and consolidating a tradition of research at a philanthropic institution in the Northeast of Brazil.[1] Much has changed since then. In 2017, the Master's and Doctoral programs in Maternal and Child Health became the Master's and Doctoral programs in Integral Health, reflecting the expansion of the research scope and the maturing of the concept of health, embraced by the institution.

It is at this moment, this Editorial is being written,with the Program on its 33rd anniversary that an unprecedented scenario in its history is unfolding: the so-called CNPq Nº. 23/2025, whose preliminary results were announced on May 15, 2026, awarded grants to all four applicants submitted by IMIP, all of which were linked to the Post Graduate Program in Integral Health. One of the awards is a Level A fellowship,the highest category in the new three-tier system established by CNPq Normative Resolution 12/2024[2] was awarded to researcher Melania Maria Ramos de Amorim, who was already a PQ fellow under the previous system.

The other three are Level C fellowships, recently awarded to researchers Leila Katz, Alex Sandro Rolland de Souza, and João Guilherme Bezerra Alves, the latter of whom co-authored the editorial marking of the Program on its 20th anniversary,[1] and is now himself a new fellow. Added to these four names is Professor Malaquias Batista Filho, a leading figure in the Brazilian public health nutrition, who continues as a CNPq Senior PQ fellow and as a researcher at IMIP, focusing on research in the epidemiology of maternal and child nutrition.

The fact that five CNPq research productivity fellowships are concentrated in a single post graduate program at a philanthropic institution in the Northeast, constitutes an event of such significance that it warrants a contextualized account. Recent analyses show that the Northeast region accounts for only 13.7% of PQ fellows in the country, compared to approximately 57.6% in the Southeast and 20.1% in the South,a distribution that reflects decades of inequality in the national science and technology structure.[3,4] Furthermore, nearly all Brazilian scholarship recipients are enrolled at Federal and State public universities, leaving philanthropic institutions with only a marginal share of the system. The fact that five PQ scholarship recipients are enrolled in a *stricto sensu* program at a philanthropic institution in the Northeast is, therefore, an indicator of exceptional institutional maturity, achieved against the odds.

We should celebrate what has objectively been achieved. In the latest four-year evaluation by CAPES, released in 2026 for the 2021–2024 period, the Program received a grade 5, a rating that indicates very good performance within the *Sistema Nacional de Pós-Graduação*[5] (National Post Graduate System). Although one can, and should aspire to more, a grade 5 is no modest achievement, considering that IMIP is not a university and that the Program is not publicly funded; it places the Post graduate program at IMIP on a par with established programs at institutions with infrastructure and faculty several times larger.

Over the course of its 33 years, the Program has graduated 320 Master's students and 140 Doctoral. Currently, it is offering its 32nd Master's program and its 21st Doctoral program in Integral Health, continuing to train qualified professionals for research,

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healthcare, management, and teaching in Brazil. In addition, it currently has 16 tenured faculty members, three adjunct faculty members, and one international visiting professor, all highly qualified and scientifically productive, working on 10 research lines distributed in three fields, Health Programs and Services, Epidemiological Investigation, Clinical and Surgical Research, and Basic and Translational Research,reflecting the thematic breadth and interdisciplinary nature that characterizes the field of Integral Health.

The Program has distinguished itself throughout its involvement in interinstitutional cooperation initiatives. As a sponsoring institution, it has awarded 22 Master's students and 14 Doctoral in interinstitutional programs and currently participates in the DINTER program in Integral Health with Emphasis on Health Professional Education, developed in partnership with the *Faculdade Pernambucana de Saúde* (FPS), which brings together 10 Doctoral candidates currently in training.

These figures reflect the cumulative trajectory of a research community that has developed as an integral part of care provided by IMIP long with the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (Public Health System), within a teaching-research-care model that has served as a benchmark for other philanthropic institutions and teaching hospitals across the country, always focusing on social impact actions. Over these last three decades, the scientific output in the Program has made a documented contribution to public policies in maternal and child health, nutrition, perinatal epidemiology, sexual and reproductive health, and various other fields that today comprise the broader concept of Integral Health.

The current scenrio, however, leaves no room for complacency. The challenges are many and must be addressed frankly. First, the number of PQ fellows is still insufficient given the number of faculty members and the scientific potential within the Program. Even with the award of four new fellowships in a single call for proposals,and considering Professor Malaquias Batista Filho as a Senior Fellow, the proportion of the Program to faculty members awarded PQ fellowships remains lower than that observed in programs of equivalent standing at public universities.

Second, the indexing and international impact of the scientific output of faculty and students must continue to grow. Third, efforts to secure external funding through competitive grant programs, both national and internationally, must be intensified, with institutional support for project planning and submission. Fourth, the internationalization of the Program,currently underway, must move beyond one-off collaborations toward structured networks with leading research institutions.

In light of this, and in recognition of the maturity the Program has achieved, it announces and reinforces a system of support and incentives for research that brings together three complementary fronts. The first is the internal curation of research projects by faculty and students, with methodological mentoring and critical review during the pre-submission stages, aimed at both securing funding and securing publication. The second is the continuing education in scientific integrity, academic writing, and critical evaluation of evidence, coordinated with the regular offering of dedicated workshops and courses. The third is the systematic encouragement of applicants for CNPq research productivity grants and fundings, with institutional support for researchers who meet the necessary criteria, organized into preparatory cycles aligned with the call schedule.

It is also worth noting, alongside of the Post Graduate Program, the history of the Brazilian Journal of Mother and Child Health (BJMCH), scientific publication at IMIP, which in June 2026 also celebrates its 25 years of uninterrupted publication. Launched in 2001 as the successor to the former "*Revista do IMIP*," the journal has evolved into a platform for disseminating research on maternal and child health conducted in the Northeast and throughout Brazil. It has established itself as a leading journal in its field and continues its pursuit of new international indexings. Over its 25 year history, marked by a strong female presence in the leadership of the journal, this is the first time that the editor-in-chief of BJMCH is a CNPq Level A PQ fellow, a distinction mentioned here not as a personal achievement, but as a sign of the institutional convergence that this Editorial seeks to highlight: the Program, the Journal, and mature research moving forward altogether.

Post Graduate Program at IMIP reaches its 33rd anniversary with significant achievements and clear tasks ahead. May the coming decade consolidate what has been achieved, expand what is still insufficient, and uphold the tradition that has made it possible, within a philanthropic institution in the Northeast, in training researchers capable of producing science of quality comparable to that of the top universities in the country. We remain committed in building a Post graduate program that is increasingly high-quality, socially relevant, and internationally recognized.

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