

# THE ROLE OF FUNLEIDE IN THE FOLLOW-UP OR ASSISTANCE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE GOIÂNIA ACCIDENT

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## Abstract

### THE ROLE OF FUNLEIDE IN THE FOLLOW-UP OR ASSISTANCE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE GOIÂNIA ACCIDENT.

The FUNLEIDE (Fundação Leide Da Neves Ferreira) was created by the Government with the objectives of planning, organising, supervising and giving assistance to the persons involved in the radiation accident with  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  in Goiânia.

The medical service of the FUNLEIDE is responsible for searching early signals for possible alterations caused by ionising radiation, such as cancer, cataract, genetic changes, etc., following a specific protocol for routine exams of the patients assigned Group I (with radiodermatitis and/or whole body dosimetry above or equal to 20 rads), Group II (no dermatitis, dosimetry below to 20 rads) and Group III (professionals who worked in the emergency phase of the accident as well as relatives and other persons who got in contact with patients from Group I and II).

The FUNLEIDE is formed by the following departments: Medical Department, Nursing Department, Laboratories, Department of Odontology, Department of Psychology and Department of Social Service. Besides the routine exams, the Medical Department provides any kind of medical assistance for the population involved in the accident.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When the most urgent problems after the Goiânia accident had been overcome and the most seriously affected patients had recovered from the acute radiation syndrome, radiodermatitis was under control and people were more calm from the psychological point of view, the Government from the State of Goiás created a public institution with the aim to continue the work carried out mainly by professionals from other states.

The Fundação Leide Das Neves Ferreira – FUNLEIDE was constituted by decreed number 2897 from February 11, 1988 with the objectives of planning, organising, supervising and giving assistance to the persons involved in the radiation accident with Cs-137 in Goiânia.

The implementation of research programs is also one of the aims of this institution, as well as the capacity and adequacy of its personal staff, co-ordination of co-operation with educational and research institutions, besides the promotion of courses, symposiums and studies.

Initially, the technical staff from FUNLEIDE was constituted by the majority of health professionals (doctors, nurses, psychologists and social assistants) who worked in the emergency phase of the accident, but later on odontologist, biochemist and biomedical staff have been added to the group.

The body of clients from FUNLEIDE is constituted by people involved to any extent with the radiation accident in Goiânia, subdivided according to the level of commitment: Group I (55 patients), Group II (46 patients) and Group III (486 patients).

Specialised services from the institution are offered to patients by the departments which form FUNLEIDE. Work is carried out in an integrated manner by all departments,

searching for comprehending solutions for the problems presented by the victims and their family nucleus.

## 2. MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

The medical service of the institution is responsible for searching early signals for possible alterations caused by exposure to ionising radiation, such as cancer, cataract, genetic changes, etc., following the protocol:

- Group I Patients (with radiodermatitis and/or whole body dosimetry equal or higher than 20 rads):
  - I. every four months they are submitted to a clinical evaluation with routine exams such as complete hemogram, V.H.S., cholesterol, glycemia, uric acid, liver function test, urea and creatinine, among other exams;
  - II. biannually they are submitted to hormonal dosage, onco-parasitic cytology (for women), routine for head and neck for patients with age above 40 years old;
  - III. annual exams: sperm counting, breast ultrasonography and mammography (according to age), bone marrow biopsy and myelogram, immunological and ophthalmological profiles and digestive endoscopy.
- Group II Patients (no radiodermatitis, dosimetry lower than 20 rads):
  - I. biannually they are submitted to clinical and routine laboratory exams (same as Group I every four months), routine for head and neck and onco-parasitic cytology;
  - II. annual exams: breast ultrasonography and/or mammography plus hormonal dosage.
- Group III Patients (professionals who worked in the emergency phase of the accident as well as relatives and other persons who got in contact with patients from Group I and II):
  - annually submitted to clinical and routine laboratory exams (same from Group I and II) and other exams according to medical criteria.

Besides the scheduled exams, the Medical Department gives support to any health alterations observed among those patients, not only related to radiation exposure but also offering different specialities on a daily basis such as medical clinics, paediatrics, oncology, gynaecology, cardiology and dermatology, also orienting people for specialists of other areas from the public and private systems.

## 3. NURSING DEPARTMENT

This Department offers ambulatory assistance giving aid to the Medical Department such as bandaging of wounds, backing exams (E.C.G.), preparation for other exams, administration of prescribed medicines, as well as orientation on basic notions of hygiene and health. It helps the doctors in clinical and surgical procedures of minor concern (debridement, biopsy). The medical schedule from Group I, II and III patients every 4, 6 or 12 months is also a competence of this department, obeying the periodicity for procedures in the department as well as the daily medical agenda.

#### 4. LABORATORY

In the Laboratory, all the clinical analysis exams necessary for the follow-up of patients as well as the chromosome study to identify eventual cytogenetic alterations caused by radiation are carried out.

#### 5. DEPARTMENT OF ODONTOLOGY

This department is responsible for checking the oral health of patients regularly, preventing and making an early diagnosis of possible lesions. The patients are oriented on how to brush teeth correctly and rinse the mouth with fluorine. Regular treatment includes: prophylactics and tartar removal, restoring, surgery, odontopediatrics and fluorine application. The services which are not possible to be made at FUNLEIDE are sent to specialists. All the information taken along the years are carefully registered by means of studies and researches, many of which have already been published, with the aim to contribute to the history of radiation accidents.

#### 6. DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

This department is responsible for:

- psychotherapeutic clinical work with children and adults which are available to do it;
- psychopedagogic follow-up of children with learning difficulties;
- intervention in crisis, focusing on the problem presented by the patient including psychological advising;
- psychological support during hospitalisation;
- use of psychological instruments such as anamnesis, tests, questionnaires and interviews for diagnosis and research purposes;
- study of cases in order to present to the different departments of the institution, suggestions on how to behave with patients.

#### 7. DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICE

The Social Service has among its tasks: to give explanations to the victims concerning social rights and means of obtaining them with the aim to facilitate access to benefits and services of the institution and out of it; to orient the patients on how to obtain social resources available in the community; to promote the capacity of patients for social contact and for solving their problems.

In the field of assistance, the Social Service is not providing direct concession of benefits (financial aid) at the moment but health follow up, by means of orientation, visits, etc.

In the field of education, it has been working on orienting and promoting speeches on hygiene, nutrition, and family budget, among others.

The Social Service also develops other activities among patients and their families such as: contact and orientation to the patient, triage, interviews, follow up, meetings, hospitalisation, exams, visits and obtention of jobs. Concerning the role of articulating and coordinating interchange with educational and research institutions, mainly in the State of Goiás,

FUNLEIDE has been impaired by the difficulties that the scientific community imposes due to prejudice to the political character of the institution. Research institutions and universities have rejected co-operation with FUNLEIDE, and developed projects, researches about the radiation accident totally separated from the ones who have a greater number of data, knowledge and information on the subject. Worse than denying contribution to the development of Science is having a prejudicial attitude towards the elucidation of facts relative to the accident.

Among the grievous effects of this presumed anti-political attitude from scientists (mainly from the social area) with support from the media and population in general, there is the instigation to insecurity, fear, emotional instability and resentment from the victims towards FUNLEIDE, making it difficult for FUNLEIDE to play the most important role of the institution and suggesting a lack of competence of the only institution which is available, in a broad sense, to make the follow-up and assist this population affected by Caesium-137.

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