



Public policies on medicinal plants and phytotherapies in the state of Ceará-Northeast-Brazil

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Linha de Pesquisa: Environment, Health, and Agro-food Systems.

1 Introduction

In 2007, with the change in the Government of the State of Ceará and the new administrative reform of the Health Department, through Decree No. 28,659, of February 28, 2007, Pharmaceutical Assistance became a programmatic execution body of the Health Department, being designated as the Coordination of Pharmaceutical Assistance (COASF). Its structure is composed of three nuclei: The Nucleus of Exceptional Character Medications (NUMEX), the Nucleus of

Phytotherapeutics (NUFITO), and the Nucleus of Essential and Strategic Medications (NUMES).

Currently, in the new organizational structure of SESA, Pharmaceutical Assistance is strategically included in the perspective of public health policies as the Coordination of Pharmaceutical Assistance Policies (COPAF), linked to the Executive Secretariat of Health Policies (SEPOS). Its structure includes the Cell of Pharmaceutical Assistance (CEASF), while logistical operations and the execution of purchases are the responsibility of the Executive Administrative Financial Secretariat (SEAFI), through the Coordination of Biomedical Resource Logistics (COLOB) and the Cell for Executing Biomedical Resource Purchases (CEBIO).

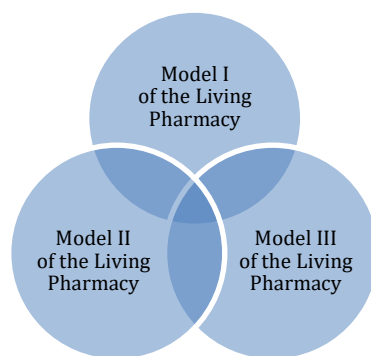
This article justifies the need to provide literature for professionals in the area, with the purpose of offering them support for carrying out organizational services in the Live Pharmacies in Ceará, in accordance with the guidelines of the National Policy on Medicinal Plants and Phytotherapies of the Ministry of Health (PNPMF/MS).

In light of this, the present study aims to identify the temporal sequence and evolution of the legal milestones associated with the public policies of medicinal plants in Ceará, discussing the implications of this evolution, as well as its integration into the health system, and to present this evolution.

2 Theoretical Framework

According to State Decree No. 30,016/2009, which addresses the Technical Regulation of Phytotherapy in the Public Service of the State of Ceará, based on the types of activities developed, such as the cultivation of medicinal plants, pre-processing, preparation of home remedies with medicinal plants, and preparation of phytotherapeutics, three models of Live Pharmacies are established by levels of complexity (Figure 1).

Figure 01. Representation of the Living Pharmacy Models at Three Levels of Complexity.



Source: Authors (2024).

Model I of the Living Pharmacy applies to the installation of medicinal plant gardens in units of Community Living Pharmacies and/or SUS (Unified Health System) units under the supervision of state or municipal public phytotherapy professionals. The acquisition of plant-based raw materials, processed according to Good Cultivation Practices (GCP), must come from official or accredited gardens and/or nurseries.

Model II of the Living Pharmacy is intended for the production and dispensing of dried medicinal plants (herbal drugs) listed by the Phytotherapy Sector/COPAF/SESA, to supply SUS health units.

Model III of the Living Pharmacy is dedicated to the preparation of phytotherapeutic products for SUS units, in compliance with the specifications of the Phytotherapy Sector Formulary/COPAF/SESA. The herbal drug used in the preparation of these phytotherapeutic products must come from official or accredited gardens and/or nurseries, provided it is processed according to Good Processing Practices (GPP).

Municipal nurseries receive certified seedlings from reference nurseries and aim primarily to produce raw materials for the preparation of phytotherapeutic products for Living Pharmacy Model III and for the pharmaceutical services of Living Pharmacies Models I and II.

In the State of Ceará, there is a Mother Nursery (Medicinal Plant Nursery Professor Francisco José de Abreu Matos of the Living Pharmacies Program at the Federal University of Ceará - UFC), one of the only medicinal plant germplasm banks in Brazil with botanical certification, a primary processing area, and a pharmaceutical workshop for phytotherapeutic preparation (CEARÁ, 2021).

The creation of Living Pharmacies by Professor Francisco José de Abreu Matos was inspired by the principles advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The use of medicinal plants by the people over the centuries constitutes a heritage of incalculable value, as it is used in primary healthcare as an efficient and low-cost therapy equivalent to traditional allopathic medicines, generally presenting fewer adverse effects (ESP/CE, 2022).

3 Methodology

This is a descriptive documental research with qualitative content analysis of Laws, Decrees, Collegiate Board Resolutions, Public Policies, Ordinances, and Normative Instructions. According to Gil (2008), this type of methodology allows the handling of materials that have not yet undergone analytical treatment or that can be re-elaborated according to the research's purpose.

For the historical scope, documents from 1983 to September 2024 were considered for inclusion. Revoked legal documents were not included in the analysis. The protocol searches were conducted on the official websites of the Ceará State Health Secretariat and in the Lilacs and Scielo databases, using the indexing terms: "medicinal plants," "public health policies," and "health planning," in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. The contents of Laws, Decrees, Resolutions, Policies, Ordinances, and Normative Instructions related to the topic were identified and analyzed.

4 Results and Discussion

The expansion of Phytotherapy actions in municipalities of Ceará, with the establishment and/or implementation of Medicinal Plant Gardens and Living Pharmacies I, II, and III, aligns with the PPA goal for Phytotherapy, which is to ensure the establishment of specialized Phytotherapy services in the Health Regions of Ceará.

The historical milestone in the development of Phytotherapy in the State of Ceará was the creation of Living Pharmacies, a pharmaceutical social assistance program based on the scientific use of medicinal plants and phytotherapeutics, an initiative of Professor Francisco José de Abreu Matos in 1983, under the influence of the World Health Organization (WHO) (Figure 2).

Phytotherapy in the State of Ceará was institutionalized in 1997 with the establishment of the State Center for Phytotherapy through the State Phytotherapy Program. Since then, the Ceará Health Secretariat (SESA), through the

Pharmaceutical Assistance Policy Coordination (COPAF), has worked on the cultivation of medicinal plants in the state's official garden and on the establishment of Living Pharmacies in municipalities.

State Law No. 12,951, dated October 7, 1999, authorized the implementation of policies to encourage research and the production of phytotherapeutic products, with the objective of enabling the Unified Health System - SUS to use such medicines for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of specific diseases. The Executive Branch is authorized to establish 20 Phytotherapy Centers in health microregions, in partnership with municipalities, promoting the creation of inter-municipal health consortia to develop their own phytotherapeutic production system (CEARÁ, 2021). In 2007, the Phytotherapeutic Center (NUFITO) of the Pharmaceutical Assistance Coordination was created.

Decree No. 30,016, dated December 30, 2009, authorized the Health Secretariat to implement a policy to encourage research, technological development, production, and innovation in phytotherapeutic products, based on regional biodiversity, encompassing native and adapted exotic medicinal plants, expanding therapeutic options for SUS users and prioritizing the population's epidemiological needs.

The Health Secretariat - SESA and the Agrarian Development Secretariat - SDA promoted community initiatives for the organization and recognition of traditional and popular practices with medicinal plants, as well as cultivation initiatives through family farming. The Health Secretariat, through its Phytotherapeutic Center, exercised overall coordination within the State of Ceará for actions arising from policies to encourage research, technological development, production, and innovation in phytotherapeutic products.

On April 20, 2010, the Ministry of Health, through Ordinance No. 886, established the Living Pharmacy within the Unified Health System (SUS). This Ordinance defines Living Pharmacies as those that carry out the stages of cultivation, collection, processing, storage of medicinal plants, preparation, and dispensing of magistral and official products from medicinal plants and phytotherapeutics.

In 2012, the State Phytotherapy Committee selected 30 medicinal plants to integrate the list of those used in Living Pharmacies in the State of Ceará, as part of the List of Medicinal Plants - Replame/CE (Ordinance 275/2012).

Based on this Ordinance of the Ministry of Health, the National Health Surveillance Agency approved Resolution - RDC No. 18, dated April 3, 2013, which provides guidelines on good practices. The processes of articulation, planning, and coordination of the State Policy on Pharmaceutical Assistance (PEAF), as well as the establishment of guidelines, standards, and procedures for good practices in prescription, dispensing, and pharmacotherapeutic follow-up, are under the management of the Executive Secretariat of Health Policies (SEPOS), through the Pharmaceutical Assistance Policy Coordination (COPAF) and its Pharmaceutical Assistance Cells (CEASF) and Health Technology Assessment (CEATS).

CESAU Resolutions No. 26/2013, No. 28/2014, No. 30/2015, No. 20/2016, No. 76/2017, and 56/2018 approve the extension of the local productive arrangements project for Medicinal Plants and Phytotherapeutics within SUS in the State of Ceará – Living Pharmacies Project, as well as requests for financial reorganization to acquire equipment and other needs.

The Bipartite Inter-managerial Commission (CIB) approved CIB/CE Resolution No. 46/2019, dated April 5, 2019, which endorses the process of Ceará municipalities' adherence to the Project for the Establishment and/or Implementation of Living Pharmacies and Local Productive Arrangements (APL) of medicinal plants and phytotherapeutics in the State of Ceará.

In 2020, Phytotherapy became part of the Pharmaceutical Assistance Policy Coordination (COPAF) within the Executive Secretariat of Health Policies (SEPOS). The Ceará State Health Council issued Resolution No. 50/2020, dated September 14, 2020, approving the extension of the Project for the Establishment and/or Implementation of Living Pharmacy Units and Organization with Local Productive Arrangements (APL) of Medicinal Plants and Phytotherapeutics in the State of Ceará, for an additional two years starting from December 1, 2020.

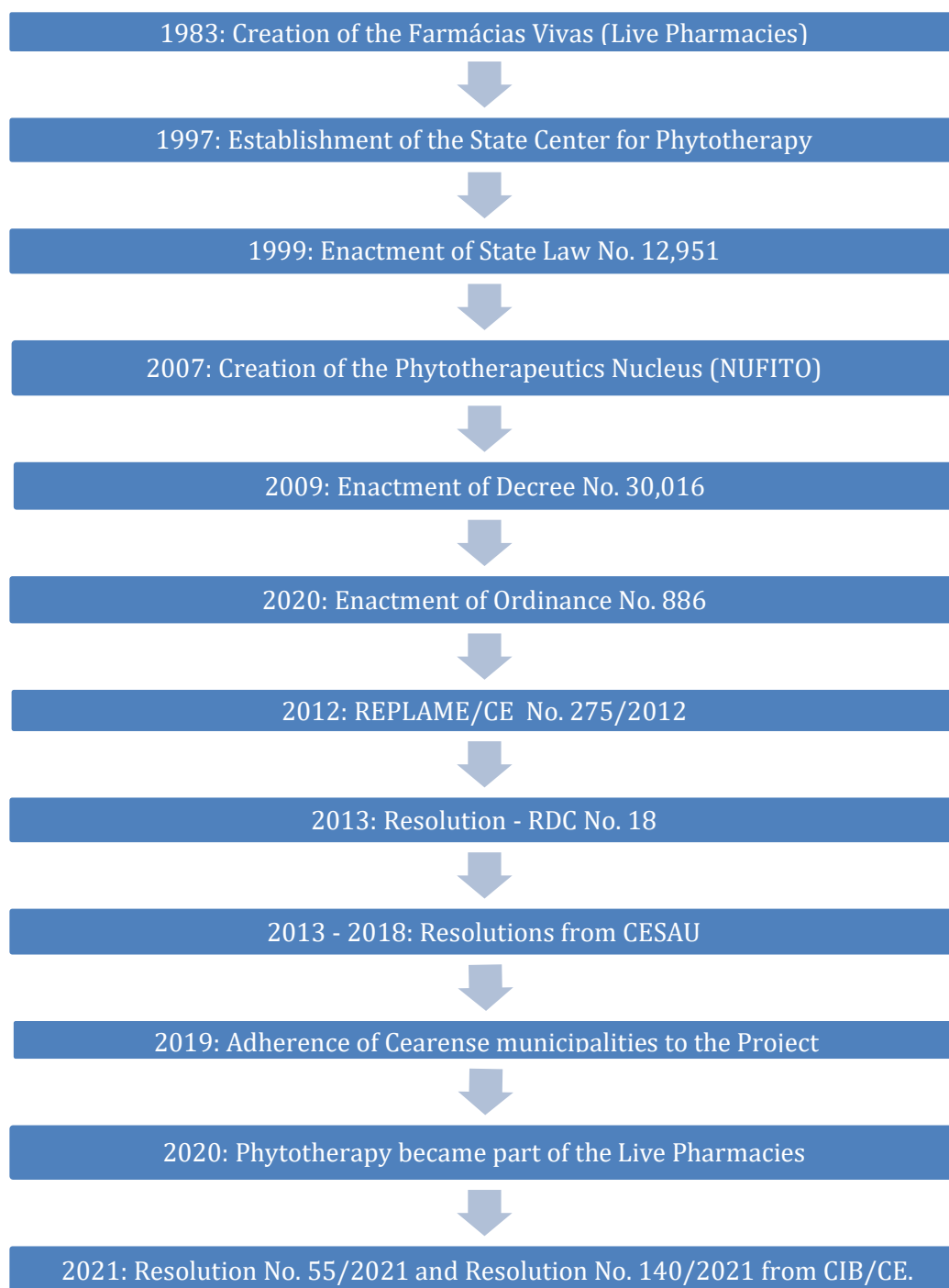
As a result, Pharmaceutical Assistance is strategically integrated into public health policies. State Health Council Resolution No. 55/2021 (CESAU/CE) approves the State Policy on Pharmaceutical Assistance (PEAF) and SESA Ordinance No. 809/2021, which modifies the composition of the State Phytotherapy Committee initially established by SESA Ordinance No. 1685/1996 and provides additional provisions.

The Bipartite Inter-managerial Commission approved CIB/CE Resolution No. 140/2021, dated October 26, 2021, approving the changes in the process of Ceará

municipalities' adherence to the Project for the Establishment of Living Pharmacies in thirty-six municipalities and the Implementation of Living Pharmacies in three.

The National Congress approved Bill No. 1922/2021 (Francisco José de Abreu Matos Law), which establishes the National Medicinal Plant Day to be celebrated annually on May 21. On this date, campaigns will be conducted to raise awareness and educate the Brazilian population on the importance of medicinal plants, organized by Federal, State, and Municipal governments with the potential support of Civil Society.

Figure 2: Main Legal Milestones on Medicinal Plants in Ceará.



Source: Authors (2024)

5 Conclusions

Based on the analysis conducted, it is observed that the state of Ceará has developed various actions and implemented public policy on medicinal plants and phytotherapeutics, despite facing challenges. This policy is notable for offering an alternative form of treatment, as medicinal plants are accessible to the population, help

to preserve popular knowledge, encourage public participation, among other aspects, all of which are facilitating factors for its implementation.

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