

## A Commentary on “The Public Communication of Science: Angular Stone of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease”

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### Abstract

The goal of this short commentary is to share some thoughts on the article entitled “The public communication of science: Angular stone of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease”. As part of a larger research project in which we identify and analyze the scientific communication strategies that Rockefeller philanthropic initiatives carried out in Mexico during the first stages of the so-called “Green Revolution”, the paper aimed to identify the importance and main innovations of the Public Communication of Science (PCS) made by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm (RSC) during its five years of life. Based on its results, the paper provides fresh perspectives on science communication research; although, we note that the archive investigations are much dependent on an North American worldview of science.

**Keywords:** Angular Stone; Rockefeller Sanitary; Hookworm Disease

### Commentary

The article entitled “The public communication of science: Angular stone of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease” identifies the importance of the Public Communication of Science (PCS) for the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm (RSC) during its duration.

Based on its results and archive quest, the paper shows how the RSC fought hookworm in Southern States. In this sense, being the first philanthropic enterprise of the Rockefeller family (the Rockefeller Foundation was chartered until 1913 while the RSC was established in 1909), the paper proposes fresh perspectives on science communication research.

This examination of the scientific communication efforts in the RSC presents itself as a first approximation on PCS studies, under the optic of a theory on PCS combined in retrospect with the learned history of the RSC, with an amount of aspects that had not been previously addressed with the sustained perspective; i.e., the basic elements of RSC’s public health communication programs; the role that PCS played in the eradication of the targeted disease; and the selected strategies to eradicate it.

These first evidences serve as an essential link to understand the origins of the internationalization of North American medicine and the ancestral role that the PCS was already playing in the implementation of new medical techniques. Studies in this line of research could have important implications on efforts aimed at understanding the functions of PCS in American medical development. One of them is that the findings are of practical importance for conducting studies which intend to shed light on the role played by the PCS in relation to the social aspects of scientific-technological phenomena.

Other important thought to be shared on the article, around the role of philanthropic foundations in the implementation and dissemination of scientific knowledge, is that the RSC activities included the cooperation of medical professionals, public health officials, trade boards, churches, schools, the press and other (The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of); and with this, they were truly pioneers on what observe on the role of philanthropic foundations in the science of science communication, that is to say: (1) build new research fields; (2) conduct, commission, or support research to participate in problems that concern society; (3) catalyze and mediate the dialogue between scientists and other stakeholders that are key to solving social-scientific issues; (4) coordinate and participate in efforts to solve social problems through science; (5) promote participation to expand public understanding and acceptance of science; and (6) assess the impact of scientific participation and the efforts that influence it .

It should be noted that the paper shows a weakness due to the source of its works cited, that is that its basis resides on one fact: the optics used to define and determine PCS’s efforts rely on the impressions of a North American worldview of science. Since the most important amount of information presented here addresses the RSC’s own affairs and the documents of its personnel, the research has limited itself to offering abstractions and notions derived from the contents of the Rockefeller Archive Center, and could have included more comparative details on the points of convergence between the public and private sectors in relation to the role of the PCS that occurred in the public agencies that operated as counterparts and alongside the RSC. However, this phenomenon was beyond the methodological capabilities and focus of the study, which focused on the RSC activities and perspectives on PCS (figuratively, yes, but also literally) in order to improve public awareness on the hookworm and its remedy.