

Paternalism towards citizens: to what extent?

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Interventions aiming at disease prevention and health promotion are the usual scene of a critical discourse of public health, often perceived as a moralization enterprise of health-related behaviours. Being assigned a duty of responsibility to act like a "good father" towards social groups exposed to risk factors, the state uses "the authority to reach a property that is not recognized as such by those whom we want the goodness" (Dworkin).

In the context of the "new public health", we will return to the ethical issues associated with the preventive mission. While some fear what appears to be a return to paternalism in the prevention of addiction, we will draw some considerations from the point of view of research to overcome the polarization of the debate between the evidence-based studies that work for the good of the people on the one side, and the critical discourse of social scientists who see prevention interventions as a means of biopolitics on the other side.