Assessment in retail of vegetables and fruits in communities of Rio de Janeiro City, Brazil

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The intake of fruits and vegetables has been encouraged because of their importance for health promotion. On the other hand, dangers, particularly chemical and microbial, can be transferred to consumers, especially from contaminated vegetables during the production. Aiming to verify the characteristics of the marketing of fruits and vegetables in communities in the western side of the city of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), respecting the ethical aspects. Interviews were conducted at 22 places where fruits and vegetables were sold, and a checklist to verify the good food manufacturing practices was applied at the establishments. According to the respondents, the most purchased fruits and vegetables were: banana (100%), orange (77.3%), lettuce (90.9%), and tomato (86.4%). In 40.9% of stores they selected and washed fruits and vegetables, before exposing them for sale. Some store keepers said they made their purchases directly with the producer. In relation to the hygienic and sanitary aspects checked, inadequacies were found in the sale of live chickens, which were trapped in cages near the shelves of fresh vegetables. In 100% of the establishments, there was no hand washing facilities for the exclusive use of food handlers, as required by law. The inadequate food handling practices were observed by the lack of workers’ qualification. Most of the stores kept cats inside them. Considering the relevance to public health, suggested interventions such as good food handling practices training in order to reduce hazards and critical points verified on the research, to promote the safe consumption of fruits and vegetables.