



**TUBERCULOSIS IN PRISON: PERCEPTION OF PRISONERS ABOUT THIS DISEASE**  
**TUBERCULOSE NO CÁRCERE: PERCEPÇÃO DOS DETENTOS SOBRE ESSA ENFERMIDADE**  
**TUBERCULOSIS EN LA CÁRCEL: PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS DETENIDOS SOBRE ESA ENFERMEDAD**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** to understand the perception of prisoners about tuberculosis. **Method:** descriptive, exploratory study with a qualitative approach, conducted with 148 prisoners in August 2014 through semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis, using thematic content analysis technique that seeks to discover what lies behind the visible content. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, protocol 748.797 and CAAE 33116914.2.0000.5180. **Results:** by the question of how the prisoners see tuberculosis, the statements converged into three categories: Tuberculosis as a curable and communicable disease; the complications inherent to tuberculosis and the lack of information about TB. **Conclusion:** the prisoners see TB as a curable disease, transmissible and with cough, stressing the need for more information about tuberculosis, adapted to the socio-cultural reality in which they are inserted, to accomplish the control of this disease. **Descriptors:** Tuberculosis; Prisons; Prisoners.

**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** compreender a percepção dos detentos acerca da tuberculose. **Método:** estudo descritivo-exploratório, com abordagem qualitativa, realizado com 148 detentos no mês de agosto de 2014, por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas e, para análise dos discursos, utilizou-se a técnica de análise de conteúdo temática, que busca descobrir o que está por trás dos conteúdos visíveis. O projeto de pesquisa foi aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, protocolo 748.797, CAAE 33116914.2.0000.5180. **Resultados:** mediante ao questionamento de como os detentos veem a tuberculose, as falas convergiram em três categorias: a tuberculose como uma doença curável e transmissível; as complicações inerentes a tuberculose e a falta de informação sobre a TB. **Conclusão:** os detentos enxergam a TB como uma doença curável, transmissível e com tosse, salientando a necessidade de maiores informações acerca da tuberculose, adaptadas à realidade sociocultural na qual eles estão inseridos, para que se possa efetivar o controle dessa doença. **Descritores:** Tuberculose; Prisões; Prisioneiros.

**RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** comprender la percepción de los detenidos acerca de la tuberculosis. **Método:** estudio descriptivo-exploratorio, con enfoque cualitativo, realizado con 148 detenidos en el mes de agosto de 2014, por medio de entrevistas semi-estructuradas y para análisis de los discursos, se utilizó la técnica de análisis de contenido temático que busca descubrir lo que está por detrás de los contenidos visibles. El proyecto de investigación fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética en Investigación, protocolo 748.797, CAAE 33116914.2.0000.5180. **Resultados:** mediante el cuestionamiento de cómo los detenidos ven la tuberculosis, las declaraciones convergieron en tres categorías: La tuberculosis como una enfermedad curable y transmisible; las complicaciones inherentes a la tuberculosis y la falta de información sobre TB. **Conclusión:** los detenidos ven la TB como una enfermedad curable, transmisible y con tos, mostrando la necesidad de mayores informaciones acerca de la tuberculosis, adaptadas a la realidad sociocultural en la cual ellos están inseridos, para que se pueda efectuar el control de esa enfermedad. **Descriptor:** Tuberculosis; Prisiones; Prisioneros.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that despite being a preventable and curable disease, it remains a serious global public health problem, particularly in developed countries, deserving full attention by governments, health professionals and society in general, to reverse this public health problem. After AIDS, TB is classified worldwide as the second leading cause of death from infectious diseases<sup>1,2</sup>

In 2012, there was an estimated of 8.6 million new cases in the world and in Brazil there was an incidence of 37.8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the most sensitive<sup>4</sup> groups to develop tuberculosis, considering the population as a whole, it is the population living on the streets, HIV-positive individuals, indigenous peoples and people deprived of their liberty. Tuberculosis is the most frequent disease in the confined population representing a major health problem in prisons, composing, from studies conducted in 1994, an incidence and a higher prevalence among prison inmates than in the population at general.<sup>5</sup>

Tuberculosis in prisons of high and middle endemic countries are an important health problem, with frequency of resistant and multi-resistant forms quite high in this environment, a fact related to irregular treatment and detection of cases of late resistance.<sup>6,7</sup>

The Ministry of Health establishes some factors<sup>1</sup> that contribute to such high numbers of TB cases among prisoners, dividing these factors into two types, the factors related to individuals and their living conditions before imprisonment: youth most men with low education; from disadvantaged communities with higher incidence of TB; higher prevalence of HIV infection; arrest background and difficult access to health services. The factors related to incarceration are: overcrowded cells, poor ventilation and low solar lighting; frequent exposure to Mycobacterium tuberculosis in confined environment and difficult access to health services in prison.

With the reality of high prevalence of TB in prisons, nursing as a profession should be inserted in this context, in order to maintain individual and collective health of imprisoned and recognizing the need to understand the view of prisoners on tuberculosis so that they can contribute significantly promoting information provision, education and awareness for the

eventual control of the disease in this population.

## OBJECTIVE

- To understand the perception of prisoners about tuberculosis.

## METHOD

Descriptive exploratory study with a qualitative approach, developed in the Regional Standard Penitentiary of Cajazeiras, in the city of Cajazeiras, PB, in August 2014.

The population consisted of all prisoners who were that place to in the cited period, that is 189 prisoners. Therefore, the sample consisted of 148 (79%) prisoners, since 22% of them refused to answer the interview and participate.

To participate in the sample, they followed the following inclusion criteria: to present the ability of understanding and verbal communication; agreeing to participate in the study voluntarily and be reclusive in the prison unit August 2014.

As data collection instrument a semi-structured interview guide was used. The interviews were conducted individually with each interviewee and participants were recruited from the cells and taken to the courtyard entrance, where interviews were conducted individually and in the presence of a prison guard, which is a routine of the institution. The instrument for data collection consisted of two stages, the first with the variables for socioeconomic characteristics and, in the second stage, the perception of prisoners about tuberculosis, which contained the following guiding questions: Do you have some information about the TB? Do you have any fear of suffering stigmatization, prejudice, if having TB infection? How do you see this disease?

In the process of analysis and processing data, it was built a spreadsheet in Excel® software, double typing; instrument data of the first stage were inserted and then categorized and analyzed. In the discourse analysis, the thematic content analysis was used,<sup>8</sup> a device used to find out what is behind the visible content, going beyond appearances of what is being pronounced.

To make a thematic analysis consists of discovering the “meaning core” that compose communication and whose presence or frequency of appearance may mean something to the chosen analytic objective.<sup>8:105</sup>

In this analytic procedure, the meaning core is seen as a unit of meaning in the set of communication. In this study, the meaning

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core was understood as ideas-axis around other ideas. Thus, the research sought to work thematic unit (of prisoner's view about tuberculosis) which converged in three meaning cores: Tuberculosis as a curable and communicable disease; the complications inherent to tuberculosis and the lack of information about TB.

The analysis went through the following steps: initial reading seeking to have a comprehensive understanding of the material; identification of meaning cores that emerged from the speeches of the respondents; discovery of meaning and interpretation and discussion of meaning cores found.

The record of the interviews was conducted through written notes. To preserve anonymity, fragments of speeches have been identified throughout the text, with the letter P (Prisoner), followed by Arabic numerals representing the order of interviews (P-1 to P-148).

It is noteworthy that, in the case of a research involving human subjects, it was complied with Resolution number 466/2012 of the National Health Council, in force in the country, dealing with ethical issues involving human beings, especially following the TCLE which ensures data reliability, anonymous, spontaneous participation, quitting at any stage of the research and authorization to publication. Therefore, the study obtained a favorable opinion and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Santa Maria School, in the Opinion Number 748.797, CAAE 33116914.2.0000.5180.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The people interviewed is exclusively male and mostly young adults, with an age range of 30 to 34 years old representing 30% (44) of the sample. In the variable race/color, there was a predominance of 94 (64%) prisoners reporting mixed ethnicity. Regarding marital status, 48% (71) of the participants were single. As for education 67% (99) of the prisoners have not completed elementary school, pointing out that out of 148 interviewed 40 (27%) were illiterate. About origin, by the very location of the prison unit of the study, 84% (124) of respondents were natives of the state of Paraíba.

When asked about getting information about tuberculosis, it was found that 145 respondents (98%) said they have received some information about tuberculosis. About prejudice, it was observed that 132 (89%) reported not be afraid to suffer

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stigmatization, prejudice, if they have the disease.

Upon the question of how the prisoners see tuberculosis, the lines converged into three categories: Tuberculosis as a curable and communicable disease; the complications inherent tuberculosis and the lack of information about TB. These categories had as objective to describe the view of the prisoners about this disease and to expose the lines of respondents clearly following topics suggested from their speeches.

### ◆ Tuberculosis as a curable and communicable disease

It was found that the study participants see tuberculosis as a curable infectious disease.

*Formerly it was terminal, but now with the treatment, it has cured. (P 30)*

*This disease is dangerous and is curable if treated. (P 85)*

*It is a disease that you take from the saliva and curable. (P 46)*

Nas falas dos participantes é notória a visão da cura existente em relação à doença, mostrando que apesar de algumas ideias distorcidas da doença, esses detentos receberam alguma informação acerca da tuberculose.

Segundo o Ministério da Saúde a tuberculose é uma doença 100% curável em quase todos os casos novos que são sensíveis aos medicamentos anti-TB, uma vez que sejam respeitadas todas as etapas do tratamento medicamentoso.<sup>1</sup> Respalhando assim as informações obtidas pelos detentos sobre a doença.

A tuberculose também apresenta um risco elevado de transmissão para as pessoas privadas de liberdade, considerando as características encontradas no ambiente prisional.

Dessa forma, quando se refere à transmissibilidade da tuberculose os detentos relatam:

In the speeches of the participants is known to view existing cure for the disease, showing that despite the distorted ideas of the disease, these prisoners received some information about tuberculosis.

According to the Ministry of Health, tuberculosis is a 100% curable in almost all new cases that are sensitive to anti-TB drugs, once they are respected all stages of treatment medicamentoso.<sup>1</sup> thus endorsing the information obtained by detainees on disease.

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TB also presents a high risk of transmission to persons deprived of liberty, considering the features found in the prison environment.

Thus, when referring to the transmissibility of tuberculosis inmates report:

*Já vi muitos morrer, ela é contagiosa. (D- 17)*

*Se tiver com ela tem que ser tratado, pois é contagiosa e quanto mais cedo tratar melhor. (D- 37)*

*Só sei que transmite de um para o outro. (D-106)*

*I have seen many die, it is contagious. (D 17)*

*If you have with it has to be treated as it is contagious and the sooner treat better. (D 37)*

*Just know that transmits from one to the other. (D-106)*

In these speeches, prisoners express fear of tuberculosis pointing it as a contagious disease, since the tuberculose<sup>1</sup> is considered an infectious disease that spreads through air and is transmitted through a person with pulmonary tuberculosis coughing, speak or exhale.

The characteristics of the prison environment, overcrowding, poor ventilation and sunlight, together with other factors such as poor diet, sedentary lifestyle, drug use and frequent exposure to the bacillus in indoor environments, favor the transmission of tuberculosis infection.<sup>9</sup>

In another study<sup>10</sup> conducted in a prison of São Paulo, when analyzing the prisoners' view about tuberculosis, its results showed that the biggest concern of the prisoners about tuberculosis (20.6%) was the access to treatment and healing and 12.1% reported that they had concerns about its transmissibility.

These results show that although the disease is perceived as curable, the healing leads to misapprehension and its contagious nature is a current concern in prisoners.

#### ◆The inherent tuberculosis complications

It was noted in the reports of prisoners that tuberculosis is also understood by its complications.

*It's too bad for the person, coughing a lot and being isolated. (P 35)*

*It is a disease that produces phlegm and lack of appetite and lose of weight. (P 57)*

*It has a chronic cough and leads to death. (P 99)*

These complications reported by respondents are very common in traditional

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symptoms of pulmonary tuberculosis<sup>11</sup> such as cough, low fever, night sweats, fatigue and weight loss, and the cough can be unproductive or expectorant. These speeches are also similar to the results of another study<sup>10</sup> where prisoners in São Paulo mentioned the symptoms of TB such as coughing with phlegm, weight loss and lack of appetite.

Despite reporting the complications inherent to tuberculosis and understand the presence of cough as a classic symptom of TB, many prisoners underestimate these symptoms considering the coughing as normal and also highlighting the violent environment in which they live, where concern for survival is priority and the idea of fragility that the disease produces creates fear, where in the prison environment the strength of the image is fundamental.<sup>12,13</sup>

#### ◆ Lack of information about TB

It was found during interviews that some prisoners reported not knowing a word about tuberculosis, as noted in the speeches:

*I only heard but I do not know anything. (P 10)*

*I know nothing about this disease. (P 50)*

*I know almost nothing. (P 63)*

It can be seen in the speeches on this category that some prisoners did not receive enough information about the disease, diverging from the result obtained in the questioning of obtaining information about tuberculosis, where a large part of the respondents replied that they had been informed about the disease. This reality found may indicate that information actions employed for the dissemination of knowledge among this population are not reaching their goal. From this perspective, it is very important the information provision, education and awareness, so there is the knowledge that the active search, diagnosis and treatment of cases, are essential for TB control and favoring the perception of health as a something good, promoting collaboration in the development of actions.

#### CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the perception of prisoners about tuberculosis understanding that this disease is reported from ancient times and is a serious public health problem with deep social and cultural roots, especially for prisoners, having a higher incidence in this population than the incidence in the general population.

The results will serve to the understanding of the nurse, in the need for comprehensive

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care for prisoner health by promoting actions to put into practice the process of nursing care, where care and health education should be continuous.

Therefore, it is concluded that these prisoners see tuberculosis as a curable, transmissible and cough, stressing the need for more information to deepen the knowledge about tuberculosis, including its peculiarities, adapted to the socio-cultural reality in which they are inserted, which in this case is the prison system.

Thus, prisoners who have some knowledge about the disease can be multipliers and pass this information to others who have not had the opportunity to receive subsidies on tuberculosis and actions employed for its control. Thus, to know the perception of prisoners about tuberculosis, it is possible to perform the planning of public policies aimed at the implementation of actions that enables the control of TB in prisons.

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