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LITERATURE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ARTICLE

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TO THE ALCOHOL USE: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW STUDY ON THE PRODUCTION OF THE NURSING FIELD

POPULAÇÕES VULNERÁVEIS AO USO DO ÁLCOOL: ESTUDO DE REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA SOBRE A PRODUÇÃO DE ENFERMAGEM

POBLACIONES VULNERABLES AL CONSUMO DE ALCOHOL: ESTUDIO DE REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA SOBRE LA PRODUCCIÓN DE ENFERMERÍA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to examine the production of nurses on the vulnerable populations to the use and misuse of alcohol and alcoholism. **Method:** this is a literature review study, with search in the books of annals and summaries of the Brazilian Congress of Nursing - *Congresso Brasileiro de Enfermagem* (CBEn), from the question << What studies on alcohol and alcoholism in the Nursing area have been conducted and published in the CBEn? >> The search was performed from 2009 to 2010 and the findings were presented by the publication year, region, institution membership and Federation State and, finally, grouped into four thematic categories. **Results:** it was evidenced that the populations that aroused the greatest research interest from the nurses were women, drivers, people with comorbidities and health services users. **Conclusion:** there were few studies on these populations; in spite of the increase, in the last years, of publications in the area. Hence, this study expands the possibilities for further researches on the production of the Nursing field in the area of psychoactive substances. **Descriptors:** Nursing Research; Alcoholism; Vulnerable Populations.

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a produção de enfermeiros sobre as populações vulneráveis ao uso e abuso de álcool e alcoolismo. **Método:** estudo de revisão de literatura, com busca nos livros de anais e resumos do Congresso Brasileiro de Enfermagem (CBEn), a partir da questão << Quais estudos sobre o álcool e alcoolismo na área da Enfermagem vêm sendo realizados e publicados no CBEn? >> A busca foi realizada de 2009 a 2010 e os achados foram apresentados por ano de publicação, região, instituição de filiação e Estado da Federação e, por fim, agrupados em quatro categorias temáticas. **Resultados:** evidenciou-se que as populações que despertaram maior interesse dos enfermeiros para estudo foram as mulheres, motoristas, portadores de comorbidades e as de serviços de saúde. **Conclusão:** foram poucos os trabalhos sobre essas populações; apesar do aumento, nos últimos anos, de publicações na área. Assim, este estudo amplia as possibilidades para outras pesquisas sobre a produção da Enfermagem na área de substâncias psicoativas. **Descritores:** Pesquisa em Enfermagem; Alcoolismo; Populações Vulneráveis.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la producción de enfermeros sobre las poblaciones vulnerables al consumo y abuso de alcohol y alcoholismo. **Método:** estudio de revisión de literatura, con búsqueda en los libros de anales de resúmenes del Congreso Brasileño de Enfermería, a partir de la cuestión << ¿Qué estudios sobre alcohol y alcoholismo en el área de enfermería se vienen realizando y publicando en el CBEn? >> La búsqueda se realizó entre 2009 y 2010 y los hallazgos se presentaron por año de publicación, región, institución de filiación y estado, agrupados en cuatro categorías temáticas. **Resultados:** se evidenció que las poblaciones que despertaron mayor interés de los enfermeros para estudio fueron las mujeres, conductores, portadores de comorbilidades y las de servicios de sanidad. **Conclusión:** hay pocos trabajos sobre estas poblaciones, a pesar del aumento en los últimos años de publicaciones en el área y que este estudio amplía las posibilidades para otras pesquisas sobre la producción de enfermería en el área de sustancias psicoactivas. **Descriptor:** Investigación en Enfermería; Alcoholismo; Poblaciones Vulnerables.

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INTRODUCTION

The use and misuse of alcohol can cause major individual, social, family and, even, community problems. It is estimated that the excessive alcohol consumption has entailed a rate of 4% of morbidities and 3.2% of all deaths across the world.¹ The alcohol misuse in the world is the cause of about 20-30% of diseases such as, esophageal cancer, liver cancer, hepatic cirrhosis, epilepsy, homicides and automobile crashes², furthermore, is the third largest health risk factor worldwide, in developed countries, and is the leading cause of health problems in developed countries of Southeast Asia, Western Pacific and Eastern Mediterranean.³ In the Americas, alcohol is the main risk factor among the 27 factors evaluated in the morbidity and mortality burden.⁴

In Brazil, the last household survey conducted in the 108 largest cities of the country⁵ showed that 12.3% of people between 12 and 65 are alcohol dependents, and that 74.6% had consumed alcohol in their lives. Among the population, there are people called vulnerable; they are people⁶ who, due to social, cultural, ethnic, political, economic, educational, and health conditions, have the differences, which are established between them and the surrounding society, transformed into inequality, and this inequality, among other things, makes them unable or, at least, greatly hinders their ability to freely express their will. From this perspective, the vulnerable groups of the population who make abusive use of alcohol, include women, elderly, prisoners, indigenous, socioeconomically disadvantaged and mentally ill individuals, as well as persons belonging to racial minorities; when belonging to more than two vulnerable groups, they are doubly stigmatized and labeled by their alcohol use patterns.⁷

Despite the consequences for the population's health and the frequent contact established between the nursing professional and alcohol users in healthcare services⁸, the issue "alcohol and other drugs" has not been considered an area of research interest among these professionals. However, according to a research published in 2005⁹, the removal of this issue is not exclusivity of the Nursing field, since before the magnitude of the troubles related to alcohol and alcoholism for the population's health, few studies have been conducted on this issue in the healthcare area.

It was still⁹ found that among the researches that has less aroused interest

among nurses are those related to the vulnerable populations, especially studies with regard to women, indigenous and elderly and, furthermore, because the Nursing produces little about this issue at stake, this area has little impact on the investigation about the issue "alcohol and other psychoactive substances", leading the authors to conclude that the Nursing is not conducting further investigations and studies or, perhaps, is not properly disclosing its production.⁹

The fact of the little interest being shown by the Nursing studies concerning the researches on vulnerable populations may suggest the inappropriate disclosure of such researches, which makes necessary to perform the investigation about the productions on alcohol and drugs in one of the biggest events of this area in Brazil, the Brazilian Congress of Nursing - *Congresso Brasileiro de Enfermagem* (CBEn). Due to it is considered one of the oldest and traditional scientific events of the Nursing area¹⁰, since there are few published studies by the Nursing regarding the issue in question, and by being one of the majors in the Nursing field, we have deemed opportune to conduct this study, with the aim of analyzing the production of nurses on vulnerable populations with regard to the use and misuse of alcohol and alcoholism.

METHOD

This is a literature review study, which was used as a tool to search for books of annals and summaries of the CBEn, through the research question << **What studies on alcohol and alcoholism in the Nursing area have been conducted and published in the CBEn?** >> For this purpose, a literature survey in the annals of the Brazilian Congress of Nursing - *Congresso Brasileiro de Enfermagem* (CBEn) of the period from 1998 to 2008 was performed.

The search was carried out from February 2009 to June 2010. 11 annals of summaries were analyzed, from which three were available in printed form (1998 to 2000), and eight in CD ROOM (from 2001 to 2008). For the data collection, the reading of the titles and summaries was undertaken, by searching for those which addressed the issues: alcohol, alcoholism and vulnerable populations. As inclusion criteria in the study sample, we have established: to address the issues - alcohol, alcoholism and vulnerable populations - and are published in books of annals and summaries of the Brazilian Congress of Nursing - *Congresso Brasileiro de Enfermagem* (CBEn) from 1998 to 2008. Regarding the exclusion criteria in study sample, they were: summaries that did not address the issue -

alcohol, alcoholism and vulnerable populations - and were not within the determined publication period (1998 to 2008).

21 summaries that were directly related to the proposed issue met the inclusion criteria. With the selected data, they were organized according to the publication year and, subsequently, categorized according to the similarity of the presented themes.

For data processing, we have used the technique of thematic or categorical analysis, which is based on operations for separating a text into units, i.e., to discover the different meaning units that constitute the communication and, subsequently, to perform their regrouping into classes or categories.¹¹

This characterization process was based on the groups pointed out as vulnerable and we could extract from the summaries four wide thematic categories for analysis: *I - Women; II*

- Drivers; III - People with disability/comorbidities, and IV - Health Services Users.

These categories were synthesized in order to present the frequency of the researched issues.

RESULTS

• General Characterization of the summaries

The analysis of the 21 summaries showed that in the years 2005 and 2008 the highest concentration (23.8%) of surveys done by nurses was found, having as object vulnerable populations before the alcohol use and alcoholism, presented and published in the annals of the CBEn (Figure 1).

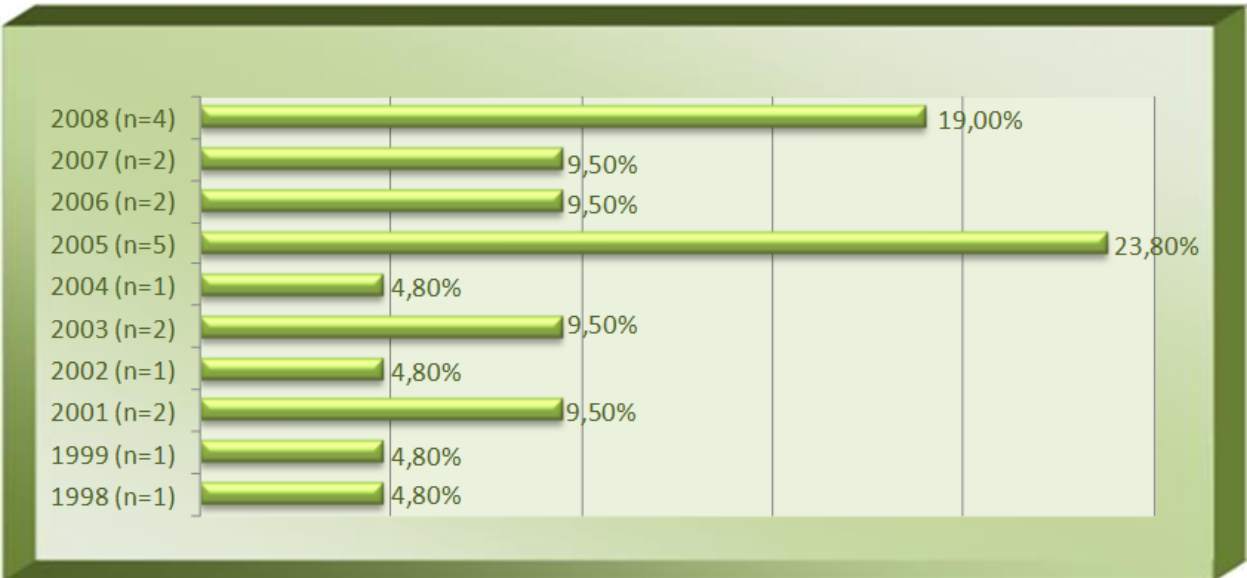


Figure 1. Distribution of the summaries published on the issue “vulnerable populations to the alcohol use and alcoholism” in the annals of the CBEn, according to the publication year. São Paulo, 2012.

As for the types of vulnerable populations before the alcohol use and alcoholism that were presented in the CBEn and published in its annals of summaries, it was observed that most were related to the population of health

services users (33%), women (29%) and people with comorbidities (24%), by evidencing that abstracts that addressed the population of drivers appeared less frequently (14%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of issues of the surveys on vulnerable populations to the alcohol and alcoholism in the annals of the CBEn, between 1998 and 2008, according to frequency of the identified categories and subcategories. São Paulo, 2012.

Analysis categories	n	%
I - Women	6	29
II - Drivers	3	14
III - People with disability/comorbidities	5	24
IV. Health Servives Users	7	33
Total	21	100

According to the origin of the studies published in the annals of the CBEn, it was found that the largest number of published papers on the issue at stake were from the Southeast region (57%), followed by the Northeast region (33%) and the South region (10%); it was also observed that there were no surveys on the issue originating from the North and Midwest regions (Figure 2).

When examining the publications regarding the origin of the Federation State, the results pointed out that the majority of surveys (28.5%) were conducted in the state of Rio de Janeiro, followed by São Paulo (19%), Ceará (19%), and Minas Gerais (9.5%), as shown in Figure 3. Regarding the membership of the authors of the surveys, the results indicated that 19% of authors were from the Federal

University of Rio de Janeiro - *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* (UFRJ), of all found memberships. In 19% of the summaries the author's home institution were not available,

and in the remaining 62% of the surveys were indicated other memberships that, grouped, do not account for 1% of the total and, therefore, they are not mentioned.

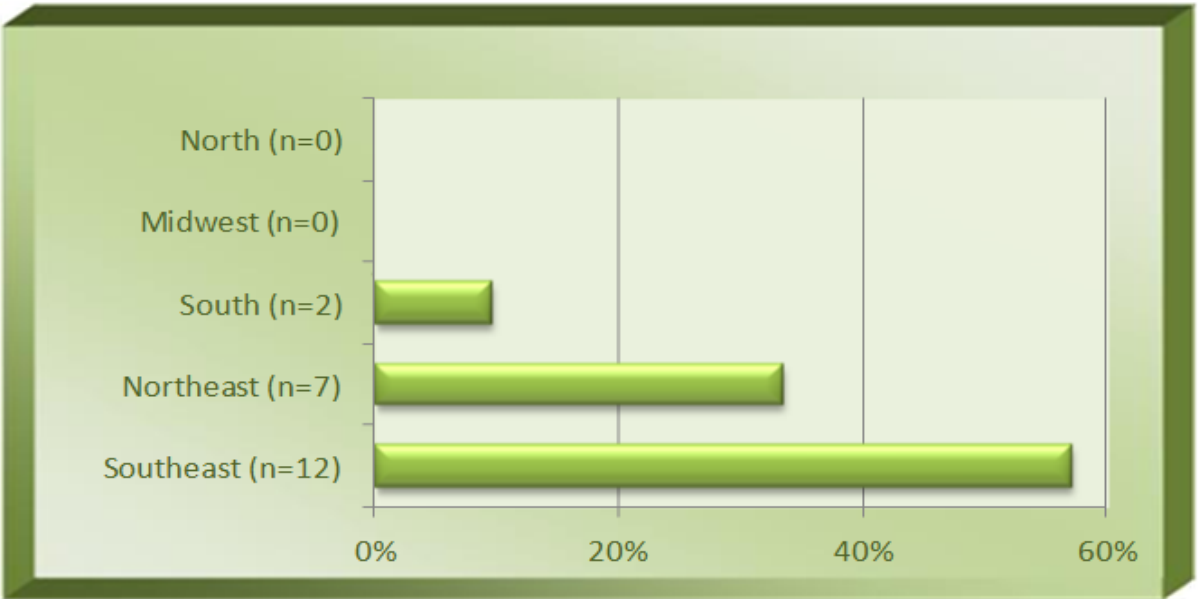


Figure 2. Distribution of the summaries published in the annals of the CBE_n, between 1998 and 2008, according to region of the country. São Paulo, 2012.

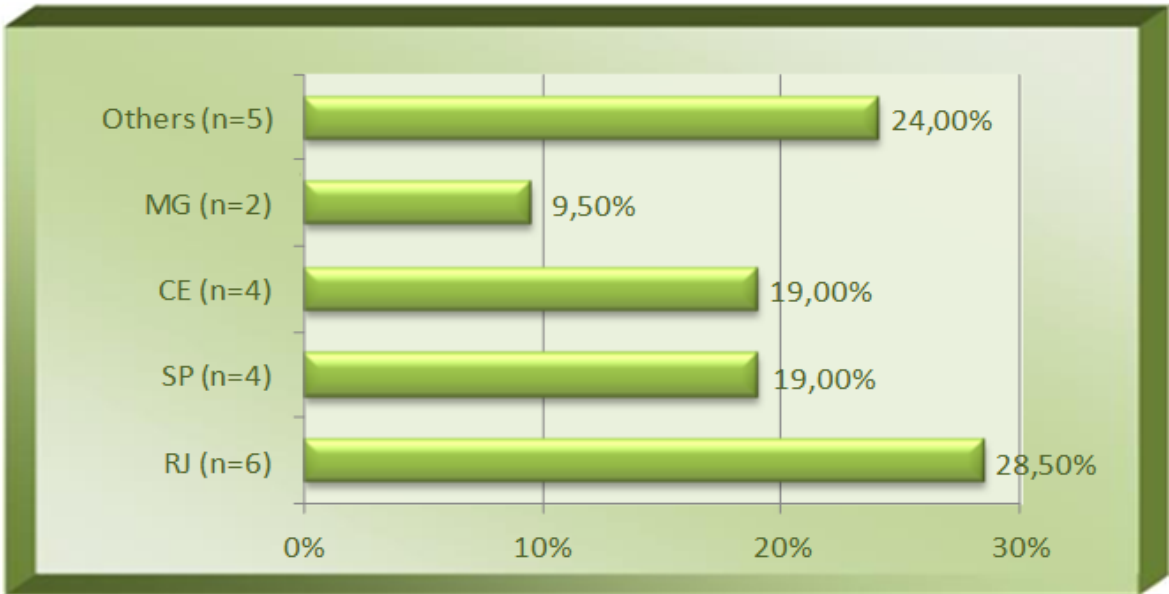


Figure 3. Distribution of the summaries published in the annals of the CBE_n, between 1998 and 2008, according to the Brazilian states. São Paulo, 2012.

• **Thematic categories according the qualitative analysis of the summaries**

The results obtained in this study allowed to gather the data into four analysis categories, as described below.

• **Category I – Women**

This category covers six (28.6% of total) summaries that aimed at studying the use and misuse of alcohol on the part of women, which were published in the books of annals of the CBE_n, during the period from 1998 to 2008.

In a research¹², it was found the alcohol use during pregnancy, as well as in the same decade, another survey¹³, related to the reasons that lead female students from an undergraduate nursing course to the alcohol consumption and the knowledge regarding the risk to their health, showed that alcohol use is

part of the daily lives of these students, and the main causes that lead them to drink are the fad (mainstreaming) and the influence of friends, in spite of knowing the risks of this habit for human health.

In the 2000s¹⁴, through the application of a semi-structured interview to psychologists, nurses and alcoholic patients, it became clear the negative complexity of the alcoholism in the individual, family, and, especially, in women, as well as the importance of the nursing professional in its performance together with the alcoholic patient by means of a variety of interventions.

In a report¹⁵ on the establishment of a Healthcare Center for the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome - *Núcleo de Atenção à Síndrome Alcoólica Fetal* (NASAF) in a hospital in the city of Rio de Janeiro, it was found the importance of the NASAF in serving the

children of women who used alcohol during pregnancy and the developed prevention during the monitoring of the pregnant woman by the nursing staff.

A qualitative research¹⁶, with the aim at describing the triggering factors of the alcohol misuse to the woman, pointed out that among such factors are: the influence of her family, age, narcissistic gratification, emotional difficulty to experience the reality and pressures from coexistence groups; it has also found that the most abusively consumed alcoholic drinks for this sample were “*cachaça*” and beer, and that this alcohol misuse leads to the personal and professional life: discussions or fights with the spouse and other family members, among other factors.

Another study¹⁷ examined the pregnant women who were receiving prenatal care at a Basic Health Unit of a city in the countryside of São Paulo and showed that the surveyed pregnant women had little knowledge about alcohol-related problems and that, according to the thought of these women, the most indicated problems were brain and development damages; 75% of the sample made use of alcohol associated with tobacco.

• Category II – Drivers

Another category originated from the thematic categorization was the category II, Drivers, which covers three (14.3% of total) summaries that addressed questions about the use and misuse of alcohol and driving.

In a study¹⁸ on the alcohol use associated with amphetamines by truck drivers, in a sample of 311 truck drivers, it should be highlighted that 28% used amphetamines, but that 21.9% who only used alcohol have already suffered accidents.

In another research¹⁹, aimed at identifying the alcohol use by taxi drivers, it was evidenced that most have already tried alcoholic drinks and that half of the participants ingested alcohol at least twice a week, despite reporting to know the health-related damages. In 2008, another study²⁰ was conducted with all individuals who experienced road traffic crashes with body injuries occurred in the city of Passo Fundo/RS/Brazil, evidencing that, when comparing the years 2007 and 2008, it was found an increase of 20% of accidents in that period, and still showed an increase in the accident rates in the subsequent month to the disclosure of law which establishes zero alcohol content level in traffic, if it is compared with the same period of 2007.

• Category III – People with disability/comorbidities

The category III, People with disability/comorbidities, deals with four (24%) summaries on the use and misuse of alcohol on the part of individuals with disabilities or who have some comorbidity type.

In a study²¹ on alcohol consumption among visually impaired people, it was verified that among 22 people interviewed during the nursing consultation, 12 reported consuming alcoholic drinks; this survey also emphasizes the idea of the nursing consultation as a strategy to support the nursing professional who work for the promotion to screen diseases such as alcoholism.

Another study²² examined the profile of the alcohol misuse among patients admitted to a teaching hospital. The most frequent found diseases were pancreatitis, cirrhosis and abdominal pains; the current motivation for drinking was both sadness and joy. 53.8% were assessed as dependents, 80.8% have already tried to stop drinking alcohol and some of them even considered that the drinking habit hinders the work and the relationships.

A research²³ found in a population of 200 individuals that 22% had suggestion of alcoholism and, of those, 25.58% were with high blood pressure levels. In another survey²⁴ on the alcohol consumption among patients with cardiovascular diseases, it was verified that, among a population of 59.9% of hypertensive people, 22.73% used some type of alcoholic drink, and among patients with hypertension and diabetes conjoined, 28.57 % used some kind of alcoholic drink, in a predominantly female population.

A study²⁵, aimed at investigating the prevalence of the alcohol consumption in patients with mental disorders in a psychiatric hospital, found that the prevalence of patients with alcohol use was higher among males (79.6%) and that 68.5% reported having started a psychiatric treatment after starting the alcohol consumption.

• Category IV – Health Services Users

This category covers seven (33% of total) of the found summaries about vulnerable populations, which studied populations from various health services of the country concerning the use and misuse of alcohol and alcoholism. This category was named like this due to the resumes included therein deal with patients from different health services that attended the vulnerable population groups.

A study²⁶ aimed at checking the users' opinions of a health service about what they consider myths and truths related to the

alcohol use, pointed out that most of them considered the alcohol like a drug and the alcoholism like a disease, 56.3% believed that the family cannot help the alcoholic individual and understood the relapse as a failure of the treatment; moreover, according to the thoughts of these subjects, any alcohol consumption consists in alcoholism, and the advertising does not influences the consumption.

In a research²⁷, in order to identify the profile of alcoholic patients, through a survey on the medical charts of a psychiatric hospital in the state of Santa Catarina (Brazil), it was found that the predominant age groups were 26-35 years and 36-45 years, most had finished the elementary school and younger males were the most affected by the addiction.

Other research²⁸, with the purpose of identifying the prevalence of admissions at an emergence care unit in the city of Belo Horizonte/MG/Brazil, found that there were 186 confirmed medical records due to diseases related to alcoholism and that, of these, 86% were on men, being that 66.6% were aged between 30 and 49 years.

In 2005²⁹, a research was conducted on the alcohol consumption pattern by unemployed people and what would be their perception concerning the impact of the unemployment situation on their health. One year later, a study³⁰ indicated that among a population of health services users from the state of Paraíba (Brazil), 14.3% were at risk for alcoholism, and 30% of this population were unemployed. In that same year³¹, in the state of Ceará, by assessing the influence of alcohol in the family of patients of a group of alcoholic dependents from the CAPS of the city of Quixadá-CE/Brazil, it was found that the consequences of changes brought about by the alcoholism in the family ambit were: stress, lack of punctuality at work, frequent lies, and the main one was the lack of affection with the wife. In fact, they suffered due to low sexual performance, family disorganization, emotional depletion, separation and, predominantly, with the unemployment.

In another study³², analyzing the users' profile of a project for reducing harms arising from the use of alcohol and other drugs in the state of Rio de Janeiro, it was verified that 78.58% of the attended patients were homeless. All participants reported having incomplete elementary school and 85.71% were alcoholics and smokers, being that about more than half of the sample was comprised of alcoholics and cocaine addicts.

DISCUSSION

We have found 21 summaries that are related to the productions of nurses concerning the vulnerable populations to the alcohol misuse and alcoholism. The populations that aroused the greatest research interest from the nurses were women, drivers, people with comorbidities and health services users. Regarding the distribution of publications on the issue "vulnerable populations", it was found that there was a significant increase of these papers in the years 2005 and 2008, since in that same period there was a time reduction relating to the masters and PHDs degrees by the CAPES, which may explain the increased production of researches at large, including in the area of alcohol and other drugs.⁹

As for the origin of these surveys, the majority (57%) was performed in the Southeast region, where the state of Rio de Janeiro was highlighted, followed by the state of São Paulo and Ceará. These data are consistent with those found in a similar study.³³ The explanation for this phenomenon may be related to the fact that the largest concentration of researchers and research groups in this area is allocated in this region. Furthermore, we can see in the years 2005 and 2008 that there were more publications on the issue when the event was held in the Midwest and Southeast regions, which may have influenced the results, since it has facilitated the participation of researchers from these aforementioned regions and, consequently, the increase of publications originating from thereof.

The sorted issues showed that the nurses researchers have been worried to investigate the use and misuse of alcohol, as well as the alcoholism in women, in spite of this group is underexplored in health area.¹¹ Most of the researches about women in these researched papers has addressed the alcohol use during pregnancy, by evidencing that few studies establish a relationship on the increased demand among the female population, because, according to the 1st National Survey on the Alcohol Consumption Patterns in the Population Brazilian, almost one-third of the heavy drinkers (drank in excessive volume at least once in the last year) is comprised of females. In two decades, the proportion of women among the alcoholic population has tripled (from 10% to 30%).

With regard to drivers, we have investigated the prevalence of the alcohol use along with other drugs¹⁸⁻²⁰, since in our country there are no reliable data on its use

among truck drivers, but the consumption can be high and possibly related to the long working hours and the high rate of traffic crashes in the Brazilian highways.³⁴

Summaries that approached the alcohol issue in individuals with other chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes, identified the high consumption in this population. Furthermore, it was found the increase blood pressure in subjects who made use of alcohol, which may be related to the lack of knowledge from the population about the problems that this drug can cause. In a study³⁵, concerned to the population's ignorance about the risk factors for chronic diseases, it became clear that the alcohol misuse was not identified by most respondents as a risk factor for diabetes (49%), lung cancer (31%) and osteoporosis (38%), which can be explained by the plentiful amount of information with regard to cirrhosis and traffic crashes as alcohol hazards, being that the others damages are less announced in the media.

Regarding the alcoholism, a study on factors associated with death by tuberculosis in the city of São Paulo³⁶ showed that the association of alcoholism, among other factors, has increased 25 times the chance of evolution to death, as well as the economic crisis, the unemployment, among other emotional problems, have lead people increasingly to do the alcohol use as a shelter. As regards to the health services users, they were included in the sample, because belonged to the groups of vulnerable populations.

The low production of the Nursing field in this area at stake leads to the shortage in other populations identified as vulnerable, for example, elderly, blacks, indigenous and incarcerated, who are not investigated by the nurses, because according to a study on the production of the Nursing on the population of high school and college students, it was fairly incipient, since among 99 found summaries on the alcohol issue published over 10 years of CBEEn, by nurses, only 18.2% dealt with the alcohol use among students and 21.2% addressed vulnerable populations characterized in this current study. Another study on the survey of the production of the Nursing concerning the alcohol and other drugs⁹, has showed that the researches about women accounted for 31.7% of the entirety, despite the higher incidence of alcohol consumption among men may lead some professionals to not check how this consumption affects the women.³⁷

It should be emphasized that more than half of these studies have investigated the alcohol use among pregnant women; pregnancy and association with psychoactive drugs, the vulnerability of the pregnant woman to the analgesic substances. In the others, the issue at stake appeared as an additional result of the surveys. These data are similar to the data from this current study, where the surveys involving women accounted for 29% of the researched sample, and most of them addressed issues related to the pregnancy associated with the alcohol use, as well as 24.1% of the surveys found in the study dealt with comorbidities⁹, whereas in this study, 24% of the summaries are related to people with comorbidities. In this study⁹, furthermore, 5% refer to older populations, demonstrating the scarcity of studies on this population.

In spite of investigating the sources of a single event and the small size of the involved sample, this research brings a breakthrough to understand the production of the Nursing in the area of the alcohol use and alcoholism among vulnerable populations. Thus, the results presented in this paper become important, because still there are few studies involving these populations in our field of work.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that, over the studied period, there was an increased production in the last five years, but the studies on vulnerable populations have intended to search for the same population groups and not to deepen into them. Therefore, this study expands the possibilities for further researches on the production of the Nursing field concerning the area of psychoactive substances and suggests that further studies on other less studied groups of vulnerable populations are carried out, mainly, because one can know that there is a shortage of researches concerned in characterizing the production of nurses in the areas of the use of alcohol, the alcoholism itself, and psychoactive substances at large.

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