



## PALLIATIVE CARE FOR ONCOLOGICAL PATIENT: BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY CUIDADOS PALIATIVOS DIRECIONADOS AO CLIENTE ONCOLÓGICO: ESTUDO BIBLIOMÉTRICO

### CUIDADOS PALIATIVOS DIRIGIDOS AL PACIENTE ONCOLÓGICO: ESTUDIO BIBLIOMÉTRICO

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to investigate the scientific productions about palliative care for cancer patients. **Method:** bibliometric study, of quantitative approach, with a documentary basis, consisting of 27 articles found in the MEDLINE and LILACS databases from 2004 to 2014. The unit of analysis consists of published articles related to palliative care directed to cancer patients. **Results:** the *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem* was the journal that most published articles on the theme, with a significant concentration of studies in the Southeastern region of Brazil and the largest number of original publications in the year 2012. **Conclusion:** scientific production on the subject is incipient and proved to be relevant in face of discussions about the theme so that knowledge about palliative care promotes a more advanced professional qualification among health practitioners. **Descriptors:** Palliative Care; Oncologic Nursing; Terminal Care.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** investigar sobre as produções científicas acerca dos cuidados paliativos em pacientes oncológicos. **Método:** estudo bibliométrico, com abordagem quantitativa, de base documental, constituído por 27 artigos encontrados nas Bases de Dados MEDLINE e LILACS de 2004 a 2014. A unidade de análise constitui-se por artigos publicados relacionados aos cuidados paliativos direcionados a pacientes oncológicos. **Resultados:** a Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem foi o periódico que mais publicou artigos sobre a temática, concentração significativa na região Sudeste do Brasil, maior quantitativo de publicações no ano de 2012, sendo do tipo original. **Conclusão:** a produção científica acerca da temática se mostra incipiente e apresenta relevância referente às discussões sobre o tema de forma que o conhecimento sobre cuidados paliativos promove uma capacitação profissional mais avançada em meio aos profissionais de saúde. **Descritores:** Cuidados Paliativos; Enfermagem Oncológica; Assistência Terminal.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** investigar sobre las producciones científicas acerca de los cuidados paliativos en pacientes oncológicos. **Método:** estudio bibliométrico, con enfoque cuantitativo, de base documental, constituído por 27 artículos encontrados en las Bases de Datos MEDLINE y LILACS de 2004 a 2014. La unidad de análisis se constituyó de artículos publicados relacionados a los cuidados paliativos dirigidos a pacientes oncológicos. **Resultados:** la Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem fue el periódico que más publicó artículos sobre el tema, concentración significativa en la región Sudeste del Brasil, mayor quantitativo de publicaciones en el año 2012, siendo del tipo original. **Conclusión:** la producción científica acerca del tema se muestra incipiente y presenta relevancia referente a las discusiones sobre el tema de forma que el conocimiento sobre cuidados paliativos promueve una capacitación profesional más avanzada en medio a los profesionales de salud. **Descriptores:** Paliativo; Enfermería Oncológica; Servicio de Terminal.

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## INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that cancer is currently considered one of several public health problems, encompassing more than 100 diseases, and it is characterized by the abnormal involvement of cells with great potential for invasion in various parts and organs of the body.<sup>1</sup> Its history is long and goes through centuries, and it has always been alarming by its potential for mortality and painful symptoms, even though there has been the evolution of its treatments and growth of cure rates.

There are several types of cancer, characterized according to the affected site. Among the most cited in the literature there is leukemia, characterized by reaching leukocytes and accumulating abnormal cells in the bone marrow; breast cancer, more frequent in women, affects breast tissue and its high indexes may be related to characteristics of modern life that women have conquered; prostate cancer is considered the most frequent neoplasm in men, having age as a risk factor, followed by skin cancer, corresponding to 25% of malignant tumors registered in Brazil.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, because it is a complex disease, cancer requires a very responsible, trained and effective professional follow-up, so that technical knowledge is linked to human practices in order to provide a qualified care to the patient affected by this disease.

When it comes to nursing practitioners, they have to combine innumerable healthcare and bureaucratic activities, and this occurs in a wide range of health services, including in cancer centers.<sup>3</sup>

However, professionals are trained and prepared for using technologies in providing care, and since this way of care is often focused on the technological paradigm, some questions arise about the needs in the process of illness and healing, when there is no possibility of recovering health. In this panorama, palliative care emerges, which is very different from the cure of medical science and values the quality of life of the individual, having comprehensive care and respect for autonomy in relation to one's own dying process as fundamental principle.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, when cancer comes to threaten life, palliative care becomes critical to the individual's quality of life. The World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>5</sup> is very clear when characterizing palliative care as an assistance promoted by a multidisciplinary team that aims to improve the quality of life of patients

and their families through the prevention and relief of suffering, early identification, impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other physical, social, psychological and spiritual symptoms.

When science fails to provide any type of therapeutic resource to promote the healing process of the patient that is in a state of fragility and limitation, the importance of palliative care becomes even greater; however, it is necessary to develop a specific form of care, causing the health team to develop actions that minimize patient suffering and discomfort.

Nursing, in turn, participates directly in this process, since the actions are linked to the patient and their families from diagnosis, treatment and prognosis, accompanying each step. In this way, the importance of human practices and adequate training arises to meet the needs of the patient's feelings, doubts, stresses and anxieties.

The actions of the practitioners are determinant in the way the patient and his/her family will go through the disease phase, and the effort to modify the culture related to palliative care to terminally ill patients is crucial, involving diverse perceptions around the patients, relatives and health professionals.<sup>6</sup>

This evidences the importance of carrying out a bibliometric study on the productions about palliative care for cancer patients, considering the need to disseminate information regarding palliative care versus cancer.

Bibliometry allows an objective evaluation of scientific production, and is employed in several areas of scientific knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Bibliometric indicators are used to evaluate the results of investments in research, production of scientific articles, patents and to answer questions about the impact of research in the scientific community.<sup>8</sup>

In view of the above, the following question arises: what contributions have been produced on palliative care for patients with cancer? To answer it, this study aims:

- To investigate the scientific productions about palliative care for cancer patients.

## METHOD

This is a bibliometric, descriptive, quantitative, documentary-based study whose unit of analysis is constituted by published articles related to "palliative care directed to oncological patients".

In order to select the publications about palliative care directed to the oncological

client in the national literature, the Latin American and Caribbean Literature Database for Health Sciences (LILACS) and the Medical Literature Search and Analysis System Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) were used. Thus, the descriptors "palliative care" and "oncological client" were used, combining the descriptors through the Boolean operator AND, which identified 27 articles.

To facilitate the analysis of the publications, data collection tables were used, including items related to the study: database, year of publication, journal, authors' qualification, research modality, number of authors, references and descriptors used. Data were analyzed quantitatively in the 2007 Microsoft Office Excel program by using descriptive statistics features with frequency distribution with absolute and percentage numbers.

Regarding the search of the articles in the mentioned data sources, the terminologies in health were used, from the Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS) of LILACS, with the purpose of universalizing the language by assigning a standard for indexing articles of scientific journals, serving to search subjects of the scientific literature in the information sources.

Data collection took place in September 2014, and the inclusion criteria for selecting the sample were: publications in the form of an article with complete texts that addressed palliative care and oncological client in its title, published in the period from 2004 to

2014 and made available in the Portuguese language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample used in this research was composed of 27 articles about palliative care and the oncological client. There was a predominance of 93% (25) of articles published in the LILACS database and 7% (2) in the MEDLINE database. LILACS corresponds to the BIREME database, comprising health literature published in Latin America and the Caribbean. MEDLINE, in the other hand, is the database of international literature on medicine and biomedicine produced by the National Library of Medicine, USA - NLM. Thus, this justifies the predominance of the LILACS database, since this study sought national publications.

Regarding the modality of the study, there was a predominance of 74% (20) of articles of the original type, and 26% (7) of articles in the review modality. An original study refers to scientific works whose research presents unpublished characteristics aiming to expand the relationship of knowledge, establishing interactions of causes for known events or new realities, thus contributing to the enrichment of the field of research.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1 shows the distribution of studies according to publications in journals.

Table 1. Distribution of studies according to the journals. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2014.

| Journals                                   | n  | %    |
|--------------------------------------------|----|------|
| Rev gaúcha de enfermagem                   | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista brasileira de cancerologia         | 1  | 4%   |
| Texto & contexto enfermagem                | 1  | 4%   |
| Escola Anna Nery revista de enfermagem     | 5  | 19%  |
| Revista o mundo da saúde                   | 1  | 4%   |
| Caderno de saúde pública                   | 5  | 19%  |
| Revista de enfermagem UERJ                 | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista brasileira de enfermagem           | 9  | 35%  |
| Revista da associação médica brasileira    | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista de pesquisa: cuidado é fundamental | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista eletrônica de enfermagem           | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista Paideia                            | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista escola de enfermagem da USP        | 1  | 4%   |
| Jornal do instituto de ciências da saúde   | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista latino-americana de enfermagem     | 1  | 4%   |
| Act paulista de enfermagem                 | 2  | 7%   |
| Revista ciência & saúde coletiva           | 1  | 4%   |
| Revista de psicologia teoria e prática     | 1  | 4%   |
| TOTAL                                      | 35 | 100% |

\* Possibility of more than one study per journal.

Table 1 shows the prevalence of 35% (9) of studies referring to the *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, followed by the *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery*, with 19% (5), and the *Caderno de Saúde Pública*, also with 19% (5).

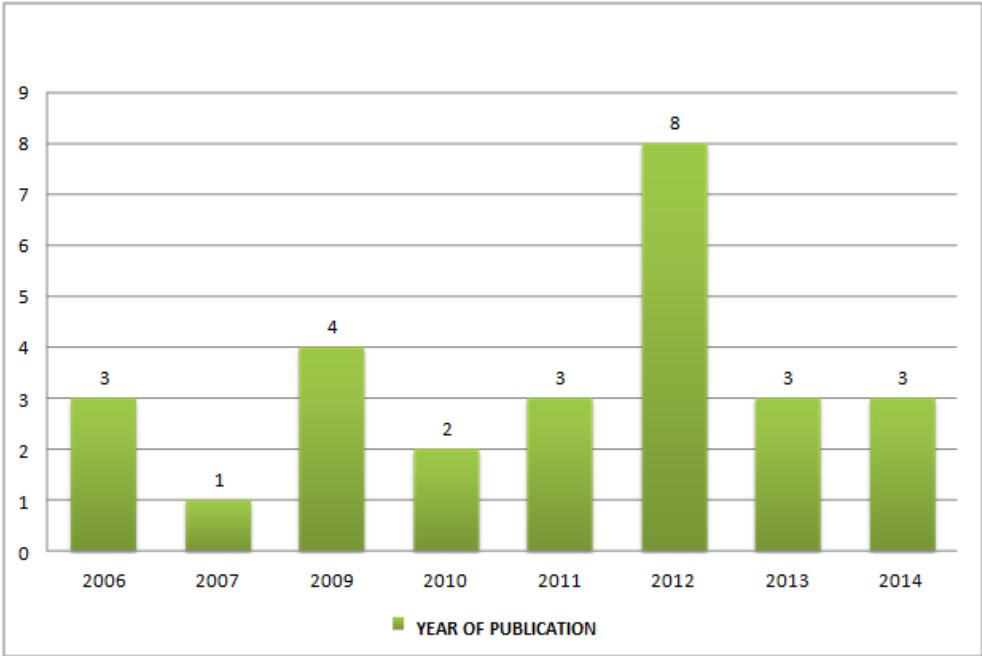
The *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem* is considered the oldest Brazilian journal related to the area of nursing. It was created in 1932 and is the official publication of the Brazilian Nursing Association, whose commitment is the

dissemination of scientific productions in several areas of knowledge, always taking into account the interest of nursing professionals.<sup>10</sup>

Characterized as being the official scientific dissemination body of the Anna Nery School of Nursing of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, the *Revista de Enfermagem da Escola Anna Nery* aims at the publication of original scientific productions of Brazilian authors or from other countries, relative to the area of nursing, health and related.<sup>11</sup>

The *Caderno de Saúde Pública* has been published since 1985. It is linked to Auroca, *Escola Nacional de Saúde Publica* of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation - ENSP-FIOCRUZ, and aims to publish original articles with high scientific merit, contributing to the status of public health in general and related areas.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 1 shows the studies related to palliative care in oncological clients according to years of publication.

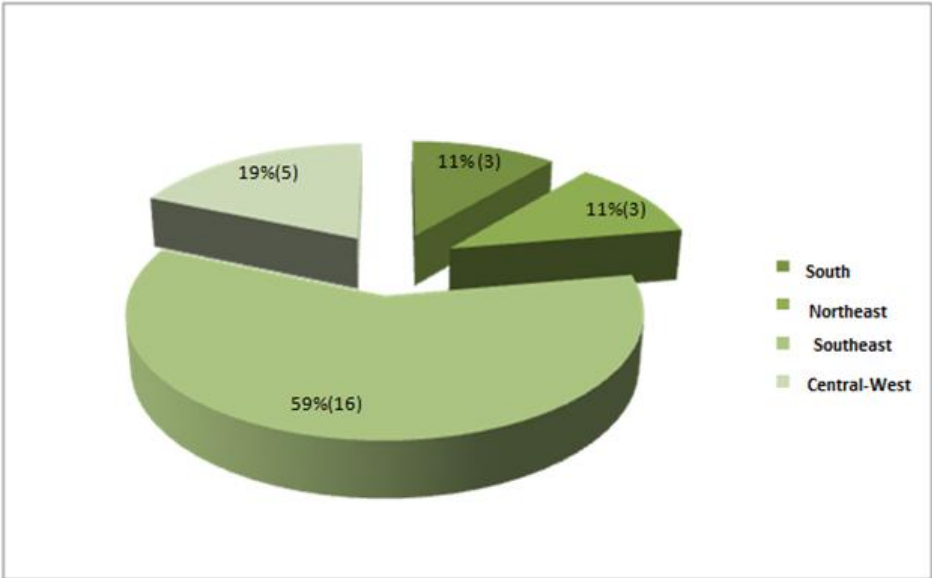


**Figure 1.** Distribution of studies according to the years of publication. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2014.

Figure 1 evidences that 30% (8) of articles were published in the year 2012; however, the scarcity of study publications regarding palliative care directed at oncological clients between the years 2006 to 2014 is noticeable. Thus, it is necessary to consider the

progressive increase of the different types of cancer in Brazil and to increase the number of research regarding palliative care offered to clients with cancer.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the studies regarding geographical origin.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of studies according to geographical origin. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2014.

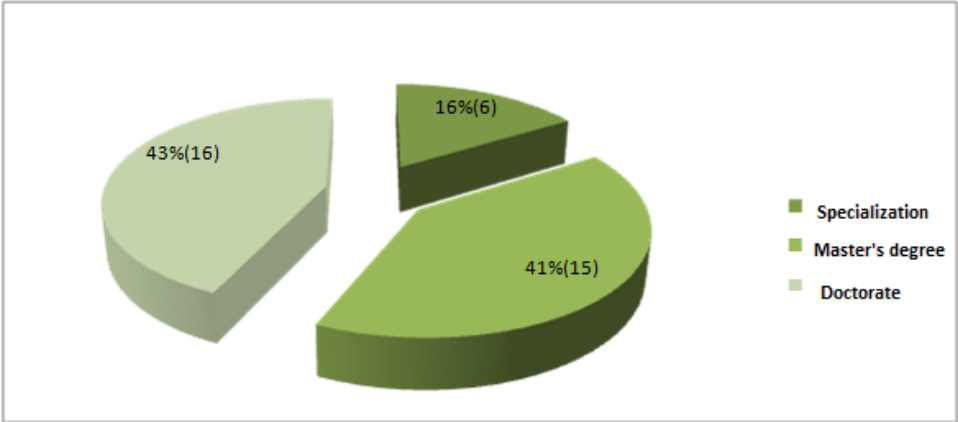
Figure 2 shows 59% (16) of articles were published in the Southeast region, 19% (5) in the Central-West region; there was incipience

in the Northeast region, with 11% (3) of articles, followed by 11% in the South region.



Being the most populous region of Brazil, the Southeastern region presents extremely high development indexes, which may explain the predominance when it comes to the geographic origin of articles related to the theme *Palliative care to the oncological client*. This relationship may also be linked to the beginning of palliative care in Brazil, which, in turn, also began in the Southeast

region, especially through the Brazilian Cancer Institute - INCA in 2005 with the creation of the Brazilian Academy of Palliative Care, in São Paulo, which further developed the area of palliative care in the region.<sup>13</sup> Figure 3 presents the qualification of the authors responsible for the publications of the studies.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of the studies according to the qualification of the authors. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2014.

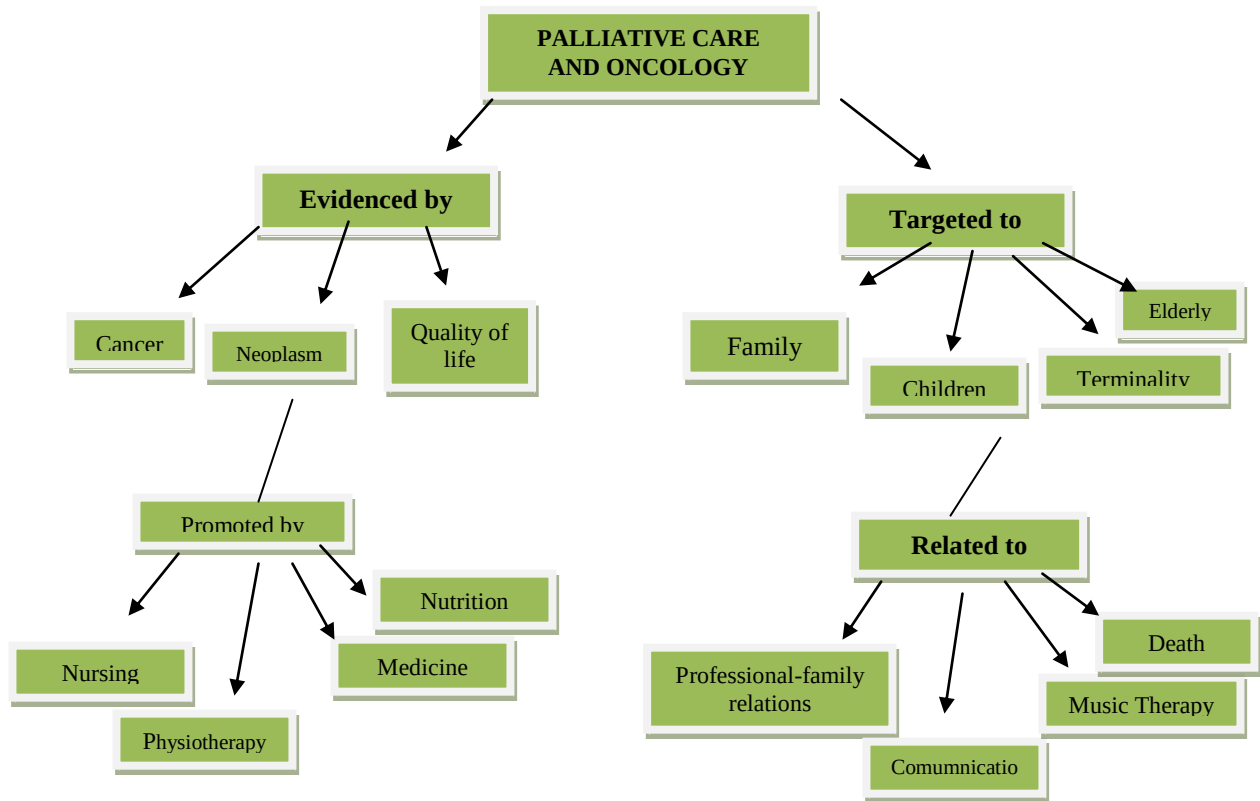
As Figure 3 shows, 43% (16) of the authors responsible for the studies are PhD, followed by masters, 41% (15), and specialists, 16% (6). Therefore, it is important to note that the labor market is becoming more and more judicious regarding the levels of professional qualification. In the area of health and in the academic environment it is not different, since the qualifications add considerable weight when it comes to the evaluation of professional capacity.

Graduate degrees appear in a considerable way in the academic world; specialties, masters and doctorates are compared to stages that evolve, making professionals more and more qualified, and for that, they need to seek new knowledge and, consequently, tend to publish more articles, especially when it comes to doctoral degree.

As to the references used, there was a predominance of 55% (27) of extracted from articles, followed by 41% (20) from manuals and 4% (2) from books. This corroborates the statement that scientific production has become more and more important, and in the health area, its contribution is essential. The type of instrument most used in scientific production is the articles, since they facilitate the production, reading and dissemination, as magazines can publish several articles in a single edition, with essential information in a simple and direct way. Thus, defined as an academic work, scientific paper presents information and descriptions of current findings on certain topics. Its development is done through the use of a method and should contain presentation and discussion of the

results and aims to bring knowledge related to the area by disseminating the results of the studies conducted.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 4 shows a conceptual map regarding the distribution of the studies in relation to descriptors.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of studies according to descriptors. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2014.

The conceptual map made it possible to recognize four thematic groups of descriptors aimed at palliative care and oncology. Evidence that palliative care influences the quality of life of patients and families is characterized by its objectives, promoting interdisciplinary actions that relieve pain, prevent suffering and provide psychological and spiritual support. For this, an investigation is necessary to allow a better understanding of complications and symptoms related to the evolution of the disease, considering aggressiveness and impairment of physical, psychological and emotional signs.<sup>15</sup>

The conceptual map facilitates the understanding of the contents found in the articles, showing that palliative care and oncology establish relationships according to their approaches, since palliative care is characterized by providing assistance with the objective of improving the living conditions of patients and their families in face of a life threatening illness, providing prevention and relief of suffering, pain treatment and treatment of various physical, social, psychological and spiritual symptoms, and all this provided by the multidisciplinary team.

Cancer, as a public health problem, has grown more and more and its approach is usually quite aggressive, and each stage of the disease has different intentions. The advanced stage of the disease or even the terminal stage may present both curative and/or palliative intention. However, palliative care and oncology work together to develop care techniques that enable comfort and support for both the patient and his or her family.<sup>16</sup>

Disease process can affect any population group and palliative care differs according to

the group to which it will be targeted. The elderly, in turn, are the most frequent age group regarding curative and/or palliative intention.<sup>17</sup>

Children, the least prevalent age group related to the curative and/or palliative therapeutic intention, need palliative care mainly to understand the process that is happening, since anxiety and aggressions of the treatment process make it difficult to understand it. The family is also a group that is well assisted by palliative care, since the impact of the disease affects not only the patient but also family members, who need psychological, spiritual and emotional support, relating the idea of playing a role of development and growth in health recovery.<sup>18</sup>

The promotion of palliative care is directly linked to a multidisciplinary team, since each specialty has its attribution in the middle of this therapeutic intention. Initially developed by physicians and nurses, palliative care has gained prominence in other areas such as psychology, physiotherapy, nutrition, among others.

Thus, palliative care establishes a direct relationship with death because it is a therapeutic modality developed directly to patients in terminal state. Death encompasses one of the main fears and challenges of patients and their family members. Communication is fundamental in this sense, because it conveys confidence and provides opportunity for verbalization and clarification. The relationships assign a value of fundamental importance. Whether the person is a family member or a professional, they will contribute to developing bond and security for palliative care practices.

One of the tools used for the development of palliative care is music therapy, a practice that uses music in the form of therapy, helping to convey tranquility, relaxation and concentration, transforming a complex and dense phase into something lighter and livelier, thus, suffering.<sup>19</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Scientific productions about palliative care and oncology of the last 10 years have identified a larger number of studies related to the subject in the *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*. Researchers involved in the subject had high qualification, and there was a predominance of studies published in the Southeast region of Brazil.

This study presents limitations on the small number of publications on the theme; however it showed a considerable variation coming from the descriptors presented by the publications. The shortage of publications regarding palliative care offered to oncological clients leads to a deficit of updates on the subject, especially for health professionals who daily deal with clients with cancer.

These results underscore the importance of new research in order to broaden the discussions on the subject and to favor the insertion of palliative care in a deeper way in the curricula of health professionals in order to promote advanced professional training, considering that palliative care promotes quality of life and well-being for clients and their families.

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