

THE ROLE OF NURSING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: REFLECTIONS BASED ON THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE THEORY

O PAPEL DA ENFERMAGEM NO CONTEXTO DA PANDEMIA DO NOVO CORONAVÍRUS: REFLEXÕES À LUZ DA TEORIA DE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

EL PAPEL DE LA ENFERMERÍA EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA NUEVA PANDEMIA DEL CORO- NAVIRUS: REFLEXIONES A LA LUZ DE LA TEORÍA DEL FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to reflect, based on Florence Nightingale's theory of Care, on the actions and challenges for nursing in the development of know-how competence in the context of the new Coronavirus pandemic. **Methodology:** this is a theoretical reflection of the literature, developed by searching the main publications obtained in the databases: Scielo, Lilacs. PubMed. **Results and discussion:** based on the researched literature on the participation of nursing in this pandemic context, the following categories emerge as a possibility for reflection: nursing in the production of health care: frontline; nursing care, education, and management role; nursing facing the COVID-19 vaccination campaign; and take care of those who care. The importance of nursing in the daily life of the pandemic is observed, whether in education assistance and the management of health workers. However, the category needs more attention from the managers, both in its valorization as a producer of continuous actions for the community, and in the attention to its needs. **Conclusion:** Given the importance of nursing, especially in this context of the pandemic, the government, together with society, should recognize and value the core role of the category in coping with different situations in daily health.

Keywords: Nursing; COVID-19; Pandemic.

RESUMO

Objetivo: refletir, a partir da teoria do Cuidado de Florence Nightingale, as ações e os desafios para a enfermagem no desenvolvimento da competência saber-fazer, no contexto da pandemia do novo Coronavírus. **Metodologia:** trata-se de uma reflexão teórica da literatura, desenvolvida ao buscar as principais publicações obtidas nas bases de dados Scielo, Lilacs. PubMed. **Resultados :** a partir da literatura investigada acerca da participação da enfermagem nesse contexto de pandemia, surge como possibilidade de reflexão as seguintes categorias: enfermagem na produção do cuidado em saúde: linha de frente; papel assistencial, educativo e gerencial da enfermagem; enfermagem em face da campanha de vacinação da COVID-19; e cuidar de quem cuida. Percebe-se o destaque da enfermagem no cotidiano da pandemia, quer seja na assistência na educação e no gerenciamento do trabalho em saúde. Todavia, a categoria carece de maior atenção por parte dos gestores, tanto na sua valorização enquanto produtora de ações contínuas para a comunidade, bem como na atenção as suas necessidades. **Conclusão:** diante da importância da enfermagem, especialmente nesse contexto da pandemia, faz-se necessário que o poder público, em conjunto com a sociedade, reconheça e valorize o papel nuclear da categoria no enfrentamento de diferentes situações no cotidiano da saúde.

Descritores: Enfermagem; COVID-19; Pandemia.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: reflexionar, a partir de la teoría del cuidado de Florence Nightingale, sobre las acciones y desafíos de la enfermería en el desarrollo de competencias de know-how en el contexto de la nueva pandemia de coronavirus. **Metodología:** se trata de una reflexión teórica de la literatura, desarrollada mediante la búsqueda de las principales publicaciones obtenidas en las bases de datos: Scielo, Lilacs. PubMed. **Resultados y discusión:** a partir de la literatura investigada sobre la participación de la enfermería en este contexto pandémico, surgen como posibilidad de reflexión las siguientes categorías: enfermería en la producción de cuidados de salud: primera línea; función de atención, educación y gestión de enfermería; enfermería ante la campaña de vacunación COVID-19; y cuidar de los que se preocupan. Se advierte la importancia de la enfermería en la vida diaria de la pandemia, ya sea en la asistencia educativa y en la gestión del trabajo de salud. Sin embargo, la categoría necesita más atención por parte de los gestores, tanto en su valorización como productora de acciones continuas para la comunidad, como en la atención a sus necesidades. **Conclusión:** Dada la importancia de la enfermería, especialmente en este contexto de la pandemia, es fundamental que el gobierno, junto con la sociedad, reconozcan y valoren el papel central de la categoría para hacer frente a diferentes situaciones de la salud diaria.

Palabras clave: Enfermería; COVID-19; Pandemia.

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INTRODUCTION

Since remote times, nursing has its action and science strongly based on care. This care goes beyond the limits of individuality, and even of empirical practice, as it unveils the need to present a scientific dimension and a deeper look at the context of doing, pointing to the production of new knowledge based on science, which provides greater support and reliability for its actions.¹

In addition to this dimension, there is a reflection on the paradigm of care in the health field and, in particular, in nursing, which brings the need to explore the skills necessary for the development of quality care: know to knowing, know-how, and knowing how to be. The competence of knowing to know is related to the acquisition of theoretical-scientific bases by health professionals. In know-how, the professional needs skills and a set of knowledge to exercise care and care efficiently; and knowing how to be is the competence closely associated with caring for the caregiver.²

In this case, the work of nursing is intrinsically associated with a health category that has acted, throughout society's history, effectively in many contexts of difficulties in the process of human illness. This category has been responsible for being on the frontline in the treatment of different diseases and for making every effort to think of strategies, both for control and for alleviating suffering during and after the illness. In other words, Nursing has been playing a pioneering role in

the development of knowledge/doing competence, performing effective care, and safe clinical management.³

However, as a science, nursing went through different moments and gained strength from Florence Nightingale's theories of care, which placed the profession in a new paradigm. Thus, the knowledge/doing of nursing goes through a new field of knowledge that intensifies the need for formal, organized, and scientific education with consolidation of the administrative, managerial and intellectual role of this category, holder of technical and scientific knowledge. Currently, Florence's ideas are present and represent the basis of nursing care.⁴

One of Florence's great contributions was the environmental theory, which identified that the clinical outcome of a patient is closely associated with the environment in which care is provided. Based on this theory, the constant observance of hygiene, sanitary issues, light and air in the environment in which the individual is treated was highlighted to provide a better clinical condition. Thus, basic criteria were defined, from a rigorous scientific approach, for the care itself.⁵

This theory is present, and with relative importance, in the current context of a health crisis, triggered by the new coronavirus pandemic that has demanded a lot from health teams and, in particular, from nursing. All professionals needed to revisit their knowledge/doing, both in individual and collective action. The demands reinforce demands not only related to technical and scientific capacity but also in the context of knowing how to be, as nursing is configured as the largest health professional category in the country and the world, covering about 2,305,946 professionals throughout the Brazilian territory⁶. This reveals challenges in the need to look at this being who cares and who also needs care.

COVID-19 is caused by SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) which is part of the Coronavirus family. The virus was first detected in Wuhan (China) at the end of 2019 and since then, it has been affecting health systems and the population in an unusual way around the world. In this context, it is necessary to recognize that nursing plays a leading role in combating this pandemic, especially in the care and preparation for the development of actions with patients who use health services, which makes the category more exposed and susceptible to virus infection.⁷

Data presented until June 27, 2021, by the Federal Council of Nursing (Cofen) through the nursing observatory, indicate that, in Brazil, the number of nurses infected by COVID-19 exceeds 57,269 cases of infection, 808 deaths and the fatality rate is 2.54%. Furthermore, the data indicate that females are the group with the highest death rate, representing a rate of 68.07%.⁸

The context demanded by the new coronavirus has caused countless losses and challenges for both the lives and health of nurses. In addition to work-related barriers in caring for the infected, professionals need to deal with psychological and social disorders and also with insecurity and fear.⁷

Given the above, this study sought to answer the following research question: what are the possibilities and challenges for nursing in the development of know-how competence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

OBJECTIVE

Reflect, based on Florence Nightingale's theory of Care, the actions and challenges for nursing in the development of know-how competence in the context of the new Coronavirus pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

This is a theoretical reflection of the literature, developed by searching the main publications obtained in the databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (Lilacs), and National Library of Medicine (PubMed). Furthermore, consultations were carried out on the website of the federal nursing council (Cofen) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The exact terms used as keywords for these searches were: nursing, Coronavirus, and pandemic. Filters related to dates, languages, or publication status were not applied and we tried to combine the descriptors, in pairs and their entirety, using the Boolean operator "AND". The study included articles that addressed the challenges and overcoming of nursing work in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nursing has contributed to the production of care in the context of health services, regardless of the performance scenarios. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of this category, it is possible to outline, in the investigated literature, the following reflections: nursing in the production of health care: frontline; nursing care, education, and management role; nursing in the face of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign; and take care of those who care.

Nursing in the production of health care: the frontline

Since nursing emerged as a profession, it has guided its actions in care, fostering the production of health science that excels in assisting the other. From primary actions to tertiary level, this category remains active and vigilant regarding the needs of patients. In the context of a health crisis, nursing strengthens, even more, standing out in its field of action.³

Such statements are under Florence's words when placing care as the focus of nursing knowledge and practice. This care goes beyond the barriers of the physical body (biologized/fragmen-

ted), reaching areas beyond the understanding of their individualities and subjectivities. Thus, care encompasses aspects of knowledge, sensitivity, meaning, and solidarity, and nursing, as an active in this know-how, seeks to understand it and improve its relationships in this new perspective.⁴

In particular, the emergence of pandemic situations causes risk alerts for the entire community. Throughout history, these moments were highlighted by a significant number of infected people and deaths around the world, as well as uncertainties and fears about the form of action for disease control. Based on the past, it is necessary to establish measures for effective action, with plans to prepare for dealing with pandemics, health management, and human resources to provide resolute and quality care.⁹

In her environmental theory, Florence brings aspects used to this day in health services, to establish an environment capable of providing quality care and avoiding the possibility of coinfections and the spread of the virus, both for the health team and for others users. Such measures, in this sense, are configured as parameters for the prevention and control of the new coronavirus, both in the hospital environment and in the community. Thus, the focus of care based on this theory must be based on hygiene and maintenance of the environment in which the individual is inserted.⁵

As a profession, the nursing category is inserted in different contexts and at different levels of health care, with a large contingent of professionals who work directly and indirectly in providing services to society, providing care in an integral and resolute way¹⁰. in the context of a pandemic, nursing continues to develop its work, as it organizes the care dynamics and assumes decision-making regarding direct and indirect patient care to facilitate and favor organized and resolute actions, given the needs of the population.

As for the role of nursing in coping with COVID-19, the actions of surveillance, prevention, control of the spread of the virus, and, as already highlighted, direct assistance to patients stand out, as they are in constant contact with patients 24 hours a day and every day of the week. In this interface, the nurses are responsible for the continuous assessment of the patients' general condition, with a subsequent request for assessment of other categories; manages care, discussing and appropriating biosafety needs for the different actors involved; they produce knowledge, seeking to format new practices from this new context, and their role is also based on the educational dimension, generating clarification and reliable information for the population.³⁻¹¹

As it has done throughout history, in moments of insecurity and instability, nursing continues to fulfill its social and professional role, integrating the frontline, including in the context of the new coronavirus, one of the most important health crises of the decade³. The role of nursing has contributed to the importance of this category's leading role. Thus, 2020 is being considered by the

World Health Assembly, through the “Nursing Now” campaign, as the year of nursing. The category is urged to show its protagonism, leadership, and, above all, its importance in the health system worldwide. Furthermore, this initiative took place to promote reflection and awareness among managers, and the entire community, for the core role of these professionals in confronting COVID-19, as well as to sow the appreciation of nursing beyond this pandemic. ⁷⁻¹¹⁻¹²

However, despite all the advances and the undeniable importance of nursing at that time, the precarious valuation of the category is still notorious. Historically, nursing invisibly performs its functions, without social recognition and, above all, financially. Added to this, these professionals are subjected to long and strenuous working hours, perceived in a secondary role, even with their visible role as protagonists within the health system. This category should be perceived as a vital force for the Brazilian health system in dealing with this pandemic.¹³

Once again, nursing stands out for its competence and its capacity to reinvent and organize its daily actions, regardless of the context of gravity in which health is inserted. However, it is worth reflecting the need for other actors to realize this highlight and value the profession in its knowledge/doing to enhance its role in the organization of health services.

Nursing care, education, and management role

Faced with new realities and challenges imposed by the new coronavirus, nursing had to re-adjust, restructure and reinvent as a profession to provide quality care, overcoming adversities to perform its work in the best possible way. It is noteworthy that the essence of the nursing care role goes beyond the development of actions of a technical nature, covering the entire network of care, attention, and empathy with others. ¹¹

From this perspective, nursing has resorted to new strategies to promote comprehensive and efficient care through the use of technological instruments and information mechanisms, such as nursing teleconsultation. The use of this tool in coping with COVID-19 was regulated by Cofen through resolution 634/2020 on March 26, 2020. Nursing teleconsultation enables contact with people, provides access to health services, expands the link with users provides guidance, referrals, and clarification about the prevention and control of the disease. Also, it enables the monitoring of suspected and mild cases, as well as reducing physical contact between health professionals and the community, without discontinuing care. This new instrument has been a crucial measure to prevent the worsening of the new coronavirus, as in addition to contributing to the maintenance of surveillance in the community, it also facilitates the removal of professionals who are classified as a risk group in health services and who were in the frontline. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁻¹⁶

It is essential to adopt actions that promote the dissemination of relevant knowledge regarding ways to prevent the further spread of the etiological agent throughout the community. Thus, it

is up to nursing professionals to the role of structure and disseminating safe and relevant information about the pandemic, through health education to collaborate with virus containment measures and favor the reduction of contamination in the entire territory. This role becomes paramount when the population faces the phenomenon of Fake News, which hinders the dissemination of legitimate content. Nursing, due to its interface and all its performance, conquers the population's trust and must be active in providing data from legitimate sources and theoretical foundations.¹⁷⁻¹⁸

Thus, nursing professionals actively participate in clinical care, in the implementation of public policies, in the management of in-service actions and decision-making, and, mainly, in the sharing of educational information for society. Furthermore, health professionals must be also trained, considering that the COVID-19 pandemic is a reality that has never been witnessed and it is essential to constantly learn about the new challenges to devise strategies to deal with exceptional situations that may arise. ³

Nursing in the face of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign

According to the Manual of Standards and Procedures in Vaccination of the Ministry of Health¹⁹, the nursing category is the team responsible for carrying out the activities of the vaccination room, provided that it holds intrinsic knowledge, which permeates the handling, preparation, administration, proper disposal, and registration. In this way, nursing professionals are the category that, since the beginning of the pandemic, acts as a protagonist in the containment measures and in the care of patients infected by the virus and plays a direct role in the operationalization of the mass vaccination campaign of the population of Brazil and the world. ²⁰

In this context, to ensure the positive outcome related to the safety and efficacy of immunobiological for their proper conservation, handling, administration, and post-vaccination follow-up, the nursing team must remain articulated. It is up to the nurse the commitment to be the supervisor of the activities of the vaccine room and for the permanent education of the team. Therefore, this professional must be present daily in the vaccine room, supervising the activities, coordinating and training the team, verifying the proper conservation of immunobiological, managing possible problems and/or adverse events of the vaccination, and, mainly, in the guidance and advice to patients. ²⁰

Meanwhile, Florence already pointed out in her studies aspects related to the subjectivity of nursing care, emphasizing trusting relationships and the importance of being close, of knowing how to listen and talk, and of being careful about the forms of expression of patients⁴. That is, the practice of nursing must be based on the constant search for improvement, mainly through the approximation between professional and patient, listening not only to their physical pain but also

their emotional pain and needs, providing a dignified and humane welcome, to the side of excellent technical service.

Currently, such measures are even more important, given the magnitude of the health crisis that the world is facing and that the effectiveness of vaccination is one of the most important and decisive measures to contain the recent pandemic. Given this, it is precisely the nursing service that is at the forefront of the main strategy for ending the pandemic and building a truly historic landmark. ²¹

Furthermore, nursing contributes to comprehensive, resolute, and humanized care, by promoting care based on quality, on the security of information for its patients, on the containment of fake News about vaccination, and leading to the dissemination of relevant information throughout the pollution, clarifying and based on scientificity through the health education process to encourage adherence of groups to vaccination. Given this, we highlight the importance of having a professional endowed with knowledge, able to guide patients, so that they acquire autonomy and insight to make decisions about their health/disease process. ²¹

Take care of the caregiver

The occurrence of a pandemic, as it is a critical situation with the little incidence in recent history, tends to trigger panic and generalized fear in the population. Especially when there is not enough knowledge or information about the etiology, mechanisms of action, virulence, and forms of treatment of the disease in progress so that society can quickly and accurately provide feedback. ²²

With health professionals and, in particular, with nursing, feelings are no different. There are doubts and insecurities about technical behavior and actions in this context. Health services, especially the hospital space, require health professionals who work on the frontline against the virus to be exposed to an environment full of adversity, also facing this situation far from what is considered ideal. It is evident crowded treatment units; critically ill patients; the amount of life support equipment below demand; lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other supplies for daily work, and also exhausting working hours, especially due to lack of human resources. ^{13-23 -24}

In addition to these issues, these professionals also need to deal with a universe of differentiated and intense feelings, such as pain, suffering, physical and mental exhaustion, and impotence in the face of lives lost to the virus and its complications. Added to these feelings, we find the risk of contamination or even death and the risk of contaminating co-workers and their families. ²³⁻²⁴

All these conditions are stressors that can affect the worker's mental health and directly impact the quality of care provided to patients. Also, there is a lack of recognition of health services, as nursing ends up having to deal with the low valuation of the profession as well, which further reduces the enthusiasm to continue working on the frontline. ²³⁻²⁴

The social distancing imposed on them is also highlighted, as the excessive workload ended up making relationships in their family cycle difficult, especially due to the fear of taking the virus home. In these situations, these professionals left their homes, being practically forced to reside elsewhere to protect their families from contagion. These injuries increased the feeling of isolation and tiredness in performing the work, which compromises the performance of daily activities. ¹⁰⁻²⁵

Also, the insecurity regarding the correct use of PPE's and the need to follow technical procedures with more caution regarding their attire and undressing are highlighted. This situation has generated more anxiety because, in many cases, it makes it impossible to fulfill physiological needs such as eating, hydrating, or even going to the bathroom, for fear of being contaminated or the frequent lack of these supplies, hindering to exchange these needs. In addition, pressure injuries are also reported due to the continuous use of masks for many hours. ¹¹⁻¹³

All these obstacles tend to impact the lives and health of nursing professionals around the world. However, in the current pandemic context, the occurrence of Burnout syndrome stands out, a debilitating condition that affects, even more, the way of being, whether in society and, especially, at work. ³⁻²²⁻²⁶

Thus, nursing faces serious implications on the frontline in the fight against the new Coronavirus, which puts their working conditions and even their safety at risk daily¹³. Nursing professionals work with resilience to provide the best patient care, despite facing so many obstacles. In this case, it is necessary to look more closely at the demands of this class, which also needs care and recognition, but, above all, public policies that ensure their rights as workers. Spaces in which there was greater organizational and social support contributed to increased resilience and reduced anxiety in the group.²⁷

The pandemic brought to light the importance of the nursing professional, who for a long time had their role subjugated to secondary status and who, given the recognition of their relevance to confront this pandemic, has gained strength in the struggle for greater valuation, including on a global level. However, it is important to continue this closer look at the nursing category beyond this pandemic context, because by providing this class with professional development, with better working conditions and decent wages, corresponding to their workload, it makes it is possible to build a strong nursing class that will be much better prepared to deal with the coming public health crises.

CONCLUSION

Nursing is experiencing a period of uncertainty in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. This context demands that these professionals are constantly updated, seeking to adapt and encourage

new ways of apprehending knowledge and improving their know-how and knowing how to be. In the face of these obstacles, this class needs to remain united, seeking recognition and valuation before society and public authorities to provide quality care and remain resilient.

In this dilemma, nursing should be seen and valued in its form, as it is the prominent category in the definition and monitoring of health care. However, it should not be overlooked that in extreme contexts, the category needs to be seen and taken care of by managers, even as a way to protect the population, and should seek to further qualify the practices offered by and for the team. That is, we need to recognize that these professionals provide a vital service for the functioning of health systems and they must be respected and valued as such so that their own needs are met.

Managers need to raise awareness of this cause while raising awareness among the population along the same path. Therefore, it is essential to have a complete nursing category with an adequate workload as a way to ensure the effectiveness of different care treatments. Only through this, it will be possible to reach a state in which health professionals have their knowledge respected within the community, also ensuring that they can face the adversities arising from this dark moment of humanity.

CONTRIBUTIONS

We inform that all authors contributed equally in the design of the research project, data collection, analysis and discussion, as well as in the writing and critical review of the content with intellectual contribution and in the approval of the final version of the study.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Nothing to declare.

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