



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### THE TEACHING ABOUT THE CARE OF ELDERLY IN THE TECHNICAL COURSE OF NURSING

#### O ENSINO SOBRE O CUIDADO AO IDOSO NO CURSO TÉCNICO DE ENFERMAGEM LA ENSEÑANZA SOBRE EL CUIDADO AL ANCIANO EN EL CURSO TÉCNICO DE ENFERMERÍA

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to analyze the formation of the students of a technical course in nursing regarding the care of elderly. **Method:** it is a qualitative research, of type Case Study. Data collection was conducted with four nurses (nursing teachers) and 25 students of the technical course of nursing, linked to a public university of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, through a self-administered questionnaire with open questions and personal information which were prepared for this research. The questionnaires were answered by nurses (nursing teachers) and the students in their respective classrooms, on time previously scheduled. The data were analyzed according to the thematic analysis. The study had its research project approved by the Ethics Research Committee from the *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* with the Opinion N°. 31/2007. **Results:** *Gerontological contents in the training of teachers; Content on the care of elderly in the training of students; Feelings generated in the care of the elderly; Need of insertion of contents on the care of elderly.* Suggestions were showed by participants on important topics to the training of the nursing technician: short duration courses about the aging process; specificity of the psychology of the aging; works on the thematic and performance of internships in the ILPI; identification of maltreatments; identification of maltreatments. **Conclusion:** Conclusion: although the students point a certain interest about by this thematic, there are gaps in the teaching of the future nursing technicians about the care of elderly. **Descriptors:** nursing education; health of the elderly; case studies.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar a formação dos estudantes de um curso técnico de enfermagem em relação ao cuidado do idoso. **Método:** pesquisa qualitativa, do tipo estudo de caso. A coleta de dados foi realizada com quatro enfermeiras professoras e 25 estudantes do curso técnico de enfermagem, vinculados a uma universidade pública no Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, mediante questionário autoaplicável com perguntas abertas e de informações pessoais elaboradas para esta pesquisa. Os questionários foram respondidos pelas enfermeiras professoras e pelos estudantes em suas respectivas salas de aula, em horário previamente agendado. Os dados foram analisados pela análise temática. O estudo teve o projeto de pesquisa favorável do Comitê de Ética e Pesquisa da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul com o Parecer de nº 31/2007. **Resultados:** identificaram-se quatro categorias: *Conteúdos gerontológicos na formação dos professores; Conteúdos sobre o cuidado ao idoso na formação dos estudantes; Sentimentos gerados ao cuidar de idosos; Necessidade da inserção de conteúdos sobre o cuidado ao idoso.* Sugestões foram apresentadas pelos participantes acerca de conteúdos importantes à formação do técnico de enfermagem: cursos de curta duração acerca do processo de envelhecimento; especificidade da psicologia do envelhecimento; trabalhos sobre o assunto e realização de estágio em Instituições de Longa Permanência para Idosos; identificação de maus tratos. **Conclusão:** apesar dos estudantes referirem interesse pela temática, há lacunas no ensino dos futuros técnicos de enfermagem sobre cuidado da saúde do idoso. **Descritores:** educação em enfermagem; saúde do idoso; estudo de caso.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** analizar la formación de los estudiantes de un curso técnico de enfermería en relación con el cuidado de los ancianos. **Método:** investigación cualitativa, estudio de caso. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo con cuatro enfermeras docentes y veinte cinco estudiantes de lo curso técnico de enfermería, vinculados a una universidad pública en Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, através de un cuestionario auto-administrado con preguntas abiertas y información personal, preparado para esta investigación. Los cuestionarios fueron respondidos por los enfermeros docentes y estudiantes en sus aulas a tiempo previamente programados. El estudio fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética y de investigación local (Dictamen N° 31/2007). **Resultados:** se identificaron cuatro categorías: *contenido gerontológico en la formación de los docentes, el contenido de cuidado de los ancianos en la formación de los estudiantes, los sentimientos generados en el cuidado de los ancianos, la necesidad de insertar contenido sobre el cuidado de los ancianos.* los participantes hicieron sugerencias sobre el contenido importante de la formación de los técnicos en enfermería: cursos de corta duración sobre el proceso de envejecimiento, la especificidad de la psicología del envejecimiento, trabajos sobre el tema y realizar actividades de capacitación en Hogares para Ancianos, la identificación los malos tratos. **Conclusión:** aunque el interés dijo de los estudiantes en el área, existen deficiencias en la enseñanza sobre el cuidado de la salud para los ancianos de los futuros técnicos de enfermería. **Descriptor:** educación en enfermería; salud del anciano; estudios de casos.

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## INTRODUCTION

The society shows a new face in which the elderly population is occupying an increasingly significant highlight on the world scenario. It is considered elderly, in developed countries, the citizen aged over 65 years old and in the developing countries, such as Brazil, people from 60 years old. This difference is directly linked to the quality of life presented in each one of the two groups of countries.<sup>1</sup>

Given the growing demand of seniors, it should be observed, the lack of preparation of health services to meet the needs of this population, with few professionals trained to care of the elderly. The pedagogical projects of the courses, in which the curricular structures are inserted, of the different disciplines of health area, still do not reflect the fact that a large part of the people served is comprised of seniors, showing up a gap between the demands of the world of work and the training of future health professionals.<sup>2</sup>

It emerges the need of qualification for those ones that act in the training of workers in health services, through specific programs of improvement to the care of the elderly, producing, as outcome, a more active and renewed staff, who address the ethical, technical and politicians aspects, consolidating an ethical of quality, the pursuit of technical competence and political commitment with the results, effectiveness and respect for senior citizen.<sup>2</sup>

The Brazilian National Health Policy for the Elderly - *Política Nacional de Saúde da Pessoa Idosa* (PNSPI) established in 2006 points out to a praxis focused to the full care of the human being, so that to contribute to that the dignified and full life is a right for all people, noting the need for training professionals capable to deal with the universe of the population, including the elderly.

Manifestations have been made, especially, with regard to the inclusion of content related to the elderly in the pedagogical projects of courses and qualifications at all levels of the health area, however, these initiatives still occur in an isolated mode and they are very few in number, if compared to the need for training of professionals in this field.<sup>4</sup>

The educational institutions of different levels, like formers of human resources, should have in their purposes, maximize a entering of the students within spaces in which the seniors are found, as the Institution of Long Permanence for Elderly - *Instituição de Longa Permanência para Idosos* (ILPI), the

coexistence groups, called Group of Senior Citizens (GSC), the self-help groups, the own home of the elderly and along with the caregivers of the elderly, beyond hospital environment<sup>5</sup>, considering services offered in the field of gerontology.

The Gerontology is a multidimensional, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary science. Multidimensional, in the sense to approach the process of human aging in all its aspects: physical, biological, psychological, emotional, social, cultural, environmental, political, economic, among others. Interdisciplinary, in according to the complexity of the phenomenon of old age, which requires the union of existing knowledge in various disciplines and the construction of a new body of scientific knowledge that guides its practice. And multidisciplinary, since it gathers theoretical concepts from different disciplines around its enlarged object of study: the aging, the elderly and the old age.<sup>4</sup>

Science Gerontology has not been much explored in courses aimed at training of nursing technicians. These has presented, in mostly of cases, disciplines related to adult health and collective health, not being directed to the care of elderly and stage of the old age.<sup>6</sup>

It is recognized the discipline of Nursing in its three different categories: nurses, nursing technicians and nursing assistants, each one with their levels of technical capability and tasks as defined by the Law 7.498/86<sup>7</sup> and by subsequent Resolutions issued by the Brazilian Federal Nursing Council - *Conselho Federal de Enfermagem* (COFEN). In Brazil, the professional of technical level exercises mid-level activity, linked to the guidelines and closely following the work of the nursing assistant and participating in the planning of nursing care, and it is responsible for performing nursing actions, except those ones which are exclusive to the graduated professional, and participate in the guidance and supervision of nursing tasks in auxiliary level and integrate the health team.<sup>8</sup>

Among the assistential activities, it is essential to emphasize the participation of nursing technicians in the care of elderly, planning along with the health team the actions for health promotion, as well as disease prevention, since the older people can be carriers of several pathologies which require more time for the provision of care.<sup>8</sup>

Delve into these issues becomes of great importance due to the increasing number of elderly in Brazil. The perception of physiological changes related to aging is

essential for completion of competent gerontogeriatric nursing care. This knowledge may help to promote practices that favor the health, identifying harms and reducing risks.<sup>9</sup>

Starting from these reflections, it should be pointed as research question: how does occur the training of students in a technical course of Nursing regarding the contents related to the care of elderly? It could be presented as objective: analyze the training of students of a technical course of nursing regarding to the care of elderly.

## METHOD

This study is characterized as qualitative research, of the type Case Study (CS). We opted for this type of research, because it was held in a natural situation, which allowed flexibility and openness for that the reality be highlighted in a contextualized way.<sup>10</sup>

The CS is a technique used to evaluate or describe dynamic situations where the human element is present. It is suitable for the construction of empirical investigation that researches possibilities within its real context with little control of the researcher on the events and demonstrations about the fact.<sup>10</sup>

We developed the CS in a technical course of nursing, linked to a Federal Institution of Higher Education - *Instituição Federal de Ensino Superior* (IFES) in south extreme of Brazil, created in 2000. It graduated its first class in 2001, with 14 students. It presents the teaching staff comprised of four teachers, all with graduation and licensure of Nursing and minimum professional experience of two years as a nurse (nursing teacher) and / or assistential.

The analysis of the pedagogical project of that course enabled to observe that in the first module were included contents of anatomy and physiology, fundamentals of nursing, nutrition and dietetics, applied psychology, professional ethics, parasitology, immunology and microbiology, hygiene, prophylaxis and work safety. The internships begin to be realized in this module in health institutions.<sup>11</sup>

In the second module, the knowledge and practices developed are related to the nursing care to adult patients and also contents of medical-surgical nursing. Students perform internship in hospital institutions, in adult inpatient units and in surgery areas.<sup>11</sup>

The third module is intended for maternal and child health. The technological bases covered include knowledge of collective health, with an emphasis on nursing care provided to individuals in different age groups

except the elderly. Also covered are the following topics: families, groups and community, related to health education, measures for health protection, diseases prevented by immunizations, gynecology, obstetrics, childcare and pediatrics.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth module involves knowledge of emergency, urgency, mental health, collective health, worker's health and applied administration.<sup>11</sup>

The participants of this research were nurses (nursing teachers) and students of the technical course. Data collection occurred through a self-administered questionnaire with open questions and personal information, prepared for this research and applied in their respective classrooms, in time previously scheduled, when they were answered and delivered the main researcher.

We used thematic analysis as analytical resource. The operationalization of this phase was constructed from the steps of pre-analysis, material exploration, processing of the obtained results and their interpretation, during which the analytical categories were elected, which guided the interpretation of results.<sup>10</sup> From the organization of the data, they were interpreted and discussed in the light of some authors and scholars of the theme and from reflections raised during the data collection.

As the research involved human subjects, the project was submitted to the Ethics Research Committee in Research in the Field of Health - *Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa na Área da Saúde* (CEPAS), from *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande* (FURG) and after its approval, with opinion nº 31/2007, the collecting data was begun. The participants received a copy of the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), which was signed by the participant and by the main researcher; a copy remained with the participant and the other one with the main researcher. To ensure anonymity, in the presentation of results, we used the letters "P" and "E": "P" for the teacher and "E" for the student, each letter gained a numerical digit, for example: (P1, P2...and E1, E2...).

## RESULTS

Initially, we present the characteristics of the groups investigated and after it, the identified categories, including the statements from teachers and / or students.

### • Characteristics of the investigated group

The sample was comprised by four nurses (nursing teachers) and 25 students of the

technical course of nursing. All teachers were female aged between 27 and 44 years old. Three were graduated from the *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande (FURG)* and *Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEL)*. One of the teachers has title of PhD in Nursing, the other ones teachers are masters.

Of the students, 24 were women and one was man, there were between 17 and 42 years old, with an average age of 21 years old. Eleven of the interviewed students were on the 4th module, i.e., were finishing the course and 14 of them were in the 2nd module (half the course).

#### ◆ Identified categories

From the thematic analysis, we identified four categories: Gerontological contents in the training of teachers; Content on the care of elderly in the training of students; Feelings generated in the care of the elderly; Need of insertion of contents on the care of elderly. Suggestions were showed by participants on important topics to the training of the nursing technician.

#### ■ Gerontological contents in the training of teachers

*[...] Yes, during the graduation at the public health part with the elderly groups, extension projects and also the preparation of a course geared for guidance on physiology and psychology in the 3rd age (course prepared by our college class). (P4)*

*[...] Nothing punctual, but we have realized to see the elderly with great respect. (P3)*

*[...] After concluding the disciplines of the Master, there was an optative discipline on the elderly health. (P2)*

#### ■ Content on the care of elderly in the training of students

*[...] Not specifically, only with adult health. (E1)*

*[...] It was not showed anything specific, we have only general knowledge of the area in question. (E2)*

*[...] There are some contents in module II on pathologies of aging, such as Alzheimer's, but do not work specifically with the healthy elderly and period of aging itself. (P2)*

*[...] It has some knowledge, but nothing that concentrates the whole process of aging in the biopsychosocial aspect. (P4)*

#### ■ Feelings in the care of elderly

*[...] Maternal feelings, sometimes I catch myself saying - let's go our big baby. The need or total dependence on care for their survival reminds me of the fragility of a baby. (P2)*

*[...] Help, caring, well-being [...] (E15)*

*[...] Charity, need to give them more attention [...] (E10)*

*[...] Solidarity, recognition of their life experience, will to stimulate them, to self-care, to talk about their experiences. (P1)*

*[...] Valorization of the potentialities [...] (P3)*

#### ■ Need of insertion of contents on the care of elderly

*[...] The course has a workload of 1805 hours divided between internship, theories and theoretical-practical, some geared specifically to the aging process, but it would require adjustments, due to setting [curricular] very 'tight' (P3)*

*[...] Especially, because the Brazilian population is 'living longer' and few investments are targeted to this population layer (P1).*

*[...] To dealing with the care of elderly have to have a special skill. (E12).*

Suggestions were showed by the participants about important contents for training of the nursing technician: short duration courses about the aging process; specificity of the psychology of the aging; works on the thematic and performance of internships in the ILPI; identification of maltreatments.

### DISCUSSION

The perception about the lack of knowledge on the human aging process by teachers reveals that, often, it is difficult to work in the classroom with the contents on the care of elderly; teachers are seeking in other institutions, new skills with regard to this thematic.<sup>8</sup>

Some teachers transmit contents on the care of elderly through their experience or self-study and continuing education. The number of qualified teachers with post-graduation and developing activities, or studying Gerontology or elderly health is still scarce.<sup>2</sup>

You can see the need for actions by the bodies responsible for nursing education in relation to the model of training, for that the professionals of this area may meet with quality the demands of health of the population that is aging, in view of the emergence of a new practicing area in nursing, as caregivers for the elderly.<sup>2</sup>

In Brazil, the clinical and preventive areas include the nursing care at individual and collective level, provided to children, teenagers, adults and elderly, considering the needs of the population in clinical, surgical, psychiatric, gynecological and obstetrics

situations and also of collective health. However, one aspect that concern us is the small number of disciplines and / or contents which address, specifically, the care of elderly.<sup>2</sup>

The gerontogeriatric contents should not be inserted in a partial manner, integrated with other disciplines, so that the dilutions and reductions of the same along the curriculum is avoided. It is necessary to pay attention to the contents on the care of healthy elderly, also emphasizing the care of the sick elderly, institutionalized, and domiciled. This situation will facilitate the student to view the aging process as a period in which the human being can suffer limitations of age, but enjoy welfare and development.<sup>8</sup>

The curricular training of professionals of the technical level in nursing, often, does not include the care of elderly at home, in hospital environment, in basic units, and within the family. The training of professional of the technical level, when directed to the care of elderly, needs to be specific, since it must to consider the conditions which involve the care of sick elderly and its family.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the feeling of care for the elderly, we realized the “infantilization”, which comes from the understanding of the need for affection, as if it could be granted only to the children. It is an inversion of concepts and extremes of life. The old person is not a child; it keeps within himself a history, a singular existence and a route for decades.<sup>9</sup>

The understanding that exists about the importance of human aging is increasingly intense, but there is still a contradiction between the discourse and the practice, which is not always put into action by citizens.<sup>8</sup> The nurses, for developing the care of the elderly humans, should consider the maintaining the well-being and autonomy, their needs and their families; work multi, inter and transdisciplinary, protection of the elderly rights and their families, among others.<sup>12</sup> This situation should also be encouraged to other nursing professionals, as technicians and assistants.

The care of elderly aims at the recognition, analysis and interpretation of the specific characteristics of the old age. The understanding of changes inherent to the aging process, physical, psychological, sociocultural and historical aspects is essential to ensure the clinical practice of gerontogeriatric nursing and helps in the

promotion of actions which favor the health status.<sup>13</sup>

We highlight the importance of the approaching of humanization in the nursing education through discussion and reflection,<sup>12</sup> because it is through it that will make a difference in care. It is necessary that the curricular structures of the nursing courses at their different levels of training contemplate contents and practices regarding the process of the care of the elderly in their different dimensions, allowing the clinical competence.<sup>14</sup>

From these suggestions by the participants, we can observe the valorization with regard to the area of aging and their specificities.

It is possible to explore more contents related to the aging process in the technical courses of nursing. Also, encourage the organization and participation of the students in events on Gerontology, which could increase the search of students by this thematic and, thus, qualify them for the care of elderly.<sup>15</sup> It is a task of each nursing course, at different levels of teaching, insert the contents on the care of elderly, articulated to the contextualization of this theme.<sup>16-7</sup>

This study has like limitations the fact of being a qualitative research, which does not intend to do generalizations and it has been developed in only one technical course of nursing. However, the study outcomes allowed deepen the knowledge regarding the training of professionals of technical level for the care of elderly.

## CONCLUSION

It was evidenced that the knowledge produced about the training of nursing professional in a technical level for the care of elderly is very low, despite the importance of the theme. In this sense, it is suggested that further studies to redirect the reflection of the pedagogical courses, preparing professionals with critical-reflexive vision for building a reality in which there is improvement in the health conditions of the general population, with an emphasis on the health of elderly.

Aiming to contribute to the training of nursing technician, it is necessary to hold seminars, addressing issues related to the aging process, by the teachers and students of this type of course. Thus, one can initiate partnerships, promoting the integration of future professionals from different levels in Nursing, with exchange of knowledge and encouraging to the teamwork.

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