EXPERIENCE OF CARING FOR ELDERLY PATIENT: SPEECH OF NURSING STUDENTS

EXPERIÊNCIA AO CUIDAR DO PACIENTE IDOSO: DISCURSO DE DISCENTES DE ENFERMAGEM

ABSTRACT

Objectives: analyzing the discourse of nursing students about the experience of caring for elderly patients and investigating whether internships contribute to the provision of care for elderly patients. Method: an exploratory study with a qualitative approach, with 10 students of the College of Nursing. A semi-structured interview, recorded; it was used to obtain statements with a script of subjective questions. They were analyzed by content analysis after the project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, CAEE n° 03576612.9.0000.5188. Results: two categories emerged: Full Care for elderly patients for the prevention of grievances and promotion of self-care; Importance of experience of taking care of elderly patient during nursing internships. Conclusion: the students have demonstrated understanding of the inherent particularities of care for elderly patients and the need for nursing professionals providing a comprehensive and systematic assistance. Descriptors: Nursing Education; Elderly; Nursing.

RESUMO


RESUMEN

Objetivos: analizar el discurso de los estudiantes de enfermería acerca de la experiencia de cuidado de los pacientes con edad avanzada y para investigar si las prácticas contribuyen a la prestación de atención a los mismos. Método: estudio exploratorio con abordaje cualitativo, con 10 alumnos de la Escuela Universitaria de Enfermería. Una entrevista semi-estructurada, grabada, se utilizó para obtener declaraciones con un guión preguntas subjetivas. Ellos fueron analizados por análisis de contenido después de que el proyecto fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética de la Investigación, CAEE n° 03576612.9.0000.5188. Resultados: emergieron dos categorías: Cuidado Completo al paciente con edad avanzada para la prevención de agravamientos y la promoción de los autocuidados; Importancia de la experiencia en el cuidado al paciente con edad avanzada en la práctica en enfermería. Conclusión: los estudiantes han demostrado comprensión de las particularidades inherentes a la atención a los pacientes con edad avanzada y la necesidad de que los profesionales de enfermería proporcionan una asistencia integral y sistemática. Descripciones: Educación en Enfermería; Ancianos; Enfermería.
INTRODUCTION

The reduction in fertility rates and mortality in recent decades has led to the increasing elderly population, resulting in population aging. This change in population structure is called the demographic transition.

Brazil has a contingent of about 21 million elderly (persons aged over 60 years old). Estimates suggest that by 2025 the amount of elderly is approximately 32 million, while Brazil occupies the sixth place in the world of the elderly population.\(^1\) Because of this accelerated process, the United Nations (UN) has put on its agenda the creation of World Assemblies on Ageing, in order to discuss the issue and commit countries to restructure their social policies for the elderly.\(^2\)

Health care of the elderly and their families is an issue that has been discussed by a growing group of professionals from Health, whose interest is justified by the awareness of these professionals about their role in an environment of widespread lack of social and health care resources, and personnel to assist these clients.\(^3\) Regarding the Brazilian Nursing study claims that the increase in life expectancy and greater demand for health services by the elderly boosted the development of studies of nursing staff in order to meet the specific needs of the elderly.\(^4\)

On the development of studies about aging, the authors state that the production of nursing knowledge in relation to patient care to the elderly, accounts for a significant share of nurses, doctors and teachers, and a substantial share of students at both undergraduate as postgraduate, which shows the linking of knowledge production courses to undergraduates and graduate strictu sensu.\(^5\)

Efforts to produce studies on aging intensified concurrently with the emergence and development of health policies aimed at the aging process. Among these policies include the National Health Policy for Older Persons, established in 2006, and Ordinance Nº 648 of 28 March 2006 approving the National Primary Care Policy and provides a review of guidelines and standards for organization of primary care, particularly for the Family Health program (PSF) and Community Agents Program (PACS).\(^6\)

As regards the participation of nursing students in the provision of elderly care, research shows that the interns enable learning about issues related to aging, old age and elder process, enabling students to modify their attitude toward this group and acquire confidence and preparation to perform care for the elderly, making them better prepared professionals for such action.\(^6\) This sense, research shows that the development of practical internships and lectures on gerontogeriatry, guarantees the student a close link between their future profession and social reality that surrounds allowing a positive dialogue between space training and social reality.\(^7\)

It is believed that this study will provide information for the improvement of nursing students, due to the importance of this topic, because leads us to rethink the development of actions to care for the elderly from the knowledge acquired during graduation. Therefore, in view of the important role played by student nurses in providing care to elderly patient, asked: what is the discourse of nursing students about the experience of caring for elderly patients?

Given the above, this study presents the following objectives:

- Analyzing the discourse of nursing students about the experience of caring for the elderly patient.
- Investigating whether internships contribute to the provision of care for elderly patients.

METHOD

This is an exploratory study with a qualitative approach. The choice for this approach is because this uses the phenomenological method as a scientific basis for their understanding in order to seek answers to questions like “what?”, “why?” and “how?”. The same attempts to understand the matter investigated and not quantify it.\(^8\)

The population consisted of graduate nursing students at the Federal University of Paraíba/UFPB, located in the city of João Pessoa (Paraíba State). The sample comprised ten students, selected by the following criteria: be enrolled in the eighth period of the course and take up the case.

The technique for obtaining the testimony was the semi-structured interviews, using the recording through the system mp3 player and the instrument consisted of a script of subjective questions containing identification data and issues related to the experience of nursing students in care for elderly patients. The period of data collection occurred in November 2012.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the technique of content analysis of Bardin, followed by phases of pre-analysis, material exploration and using the results. The pre analysis aims to organize the
initial ideas, leading the analyst to develop indicators that underlie the final interpretation; exploration of the material leads the analyst to perform various readings and group the initial ideas, then emerging categories and their subcategories, and the treatment of the results is the moment in which the researcher makes the inference or interpretation and presents data in categories.9 The testimonies of the study participants were referred by the Convention (Dept. 1), corresponding to one affidavit, and so on.

The research was initiated only after the approval of the research project by the Research Ethics Committee of the Centre for Health Sciences, Federal University of Paraíba, by CAEE n. 03576612.9.0000.5188; share declared and accepted by employees, signed with the term of informed consent, as set forth in Resolution 196/1996 of the National Health Council.10

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participated in the study, ten students of the eighth semester of the degree course in Nursing, Federal University of Paraíba, all female participants, aged between 22 and 26. All participants had already attended courses in the Nursing Care of Adult and Elder Health I and II. And when asked about the experience of the care of elderly patients, all participants (100%) responded that their experience is related to experiencing the Required Curriculum Internships in hospitals and Family Health Units. Of these, four (40%) also participate in outreach activities that address the theme, and two (20%) participate in monitoring activities related to the health of the elderly. ie, all demonstrated to have some kind of minimum experience or deepness of the theme. This expressive number of interviews students in activities geared to elderly health, study contradicts results obtained by pointing a low participation of nursing students in outreach activities in the field of gerontology.11

The analysis procedure adopted in this study enabled the construction of two discursive categories: comprehensive care for elderly patients for the prevention of diseases and promotion of self-care, and Importance of experience taking care of elderly patient during nursing internships.

♦ First Category: integral to the elderly patient for the prevention of diseases and promotion of self-care.

In this category, it became clear through the interviews that the care provided to the elderly by nursing students are patient are directly related to the physiological, psychological and emotional changes of patients. They report in their speech to a special care, holistically, and in order to prevent disease and encourage self-care to the elderly population, as evidenced in the statements below:

[…] The older patient has multiple issues: it is a very complex age of life, right? With various problems, chronic diseases, etc. […] And the elderly care, so I think that has to be full. […] You have to evaluate holistically, what we call, right? (Dept. 1)

Must be careful, therefore, facing the specifics, because usually they have a disease that does not have the same clinical picture of people, symptoms have to be attentive to it […]. (Dept. 2)

It is a special care. Mainly by the physiological part of them that is different. The emotional part of them is also very different; you have to take an extra care with it. The way of speaking have to give much more attention you give to other patients […]. (Dept. 3)

[…] The elderly have various physiological changes […]. Psychological, all he had those problems, those defects of character that he had become more pronounced […] (Dept. 4)

The care for elderly patients is to consider the needs of patient / user, specifically in their best age, knowing the most frequent diseases in this season of life, to treat them and prevent them, improving their quality of life. (Dept. 10)

This understanding of students suggests a breakthrough in the perspective of care for elderly patients, since one of the major difficulties faced by nurses is to provide care appropriate to the needs of the elderly. The students believe that these changes may directly affect the type and quality of care provided to the elderly and in communication with this patient.

In general, increasing age is associated with increased risk of occurrence of the frailty syndrome. The frail elderly, or in situations of fragility, can be considered one who lives in Institutions for the Aged (ILP), was hospitalized recently, is bedridden, living in situations of domestic violence, presents disease-causing functional disability, among others. Some changes in the health of the elderly cause difficulties in their daily life, such as the failure to ambulate and have visual deficits that prevent the elderly from exercising their activities of daily life and reflect on the way people see in their family and social core.12
The students interviewed also spoke about comprehensive health care and the necessity of providing holistic care to elderly patient, in order to offer a differentiated and quality care that meets the needs and limitations of the public.

In this context, the study points to the completeness as the search expanded seizure of health needs, consider that the elderly and their families as subjects participating in the co-construction of shared care responses and optimization of care.15

Allied to this, the training of human resources in the health of the elderly is directly related to understanding the aging process and its repercussions bio-psychosocial and stand together to comprehensive care, there is a need for interdisciplinary work to provide quality care the elderly patient and their family.15

The statements listed in this category demonstrate the interest of nursing students by area of health in the elderly, suggesting that possess the awareness that nursing professionals should provide a comprehensive and systematic assistance by identifying and assessing the needs of the elderly patient so that thus can improve their health by minimizing losses and limitations, facilitating diagnosis and assisting in treatment, and provide comfort whenever it needs.14

From the testimonials we may infer that academic nursing education should be geared to sensitize professionals about the limits and peculiarities present in the elderly, so they can understand the physical, emotional and social changes in this age group and improve the quality assistance.

Regarding communication with elderly patients, it is possible to realize by Dep. 3, the student believes that the establishment of communication with the elderly be differentiated from other age groups, since the nurse must have attention in the form of talking. This is because the practice of nursing care requires sensitivity to the peculiarities of the professional front of each patient, an aspect previously mentioned.

Effective and efficient communication between health professionals and the elderly are directly related to the perception of health and therapeutic outcomes of the elderly, which is linked to the biopsychosocial health.15

In this sense, we highlight the role of nurses in communicating with elderly patient. About it, study indicates that for the elderly care patient succeeds is necessary that the nursing professional has the ability to understand the patient's communication style and adapt it to your style, so you can increase the effectiveness and satisfaction this interpersonal relationship.16 In this context, the statement mentioned above (Dept. 3) suggests that the student has the notion that, besides being a patient in need of special care, elderly patients is also different from the emotional and communicational view, indicating the need adaptation of the student / professional to their level of understanding.

The students also spoke about the risks to which elderly patients are exposed, with emphasis to the vast majority of respondents, the risk of falls and the risk of depression, as noted below.

[...] A physical issue, because several factors will interfere, right? Because vision problems will generate falls, depression problems, age, depression problems that will cause immunological problems. (Dep. 1)

Look, the first thing that comes to my mind is the question of risk of falls [...]. (Dep. 4) [...] Because they are insecure, afraid, we have to explain the disease. [...] It feels very alone in the hospital. It is a different patient, kind, a teenager or a person who does not belong to this age group. (Dep. 5)

Regarding the elderly, falls may result from fractures and activity restriction to the increased risk of institutionalization or death. Therefore, the increase in life expectancy requires prevention and rehabilitation by health professionals in order to reduce the number of risk factors for falls.15

The elderly experience loss in many aspects of life, increasing their vulnerability to developing a depressive disorder. Among the factors that may contribute to a psychiatric disorder, highlight the isolation, difficulties in personal relationships, communication problems, poverty, widowhood, and commitment to long-term care services. Thus, it is necessary to create programs for the elderly, in order to promote their participation in social movements and welfare, as well as involvement in cultural, sporting and leisure activities in order to decrease the depressive symptoms this age group.17

The statements reveal the understanding of students about the relationship between their own changes of aging and the risks to which the elderly are exposed.

With regard to self-care, we found that the students emphasize the role of the nurse in the prevention and promotion of self-care among the elderly in order to minimize injuries and illnesses. Let us listen to the testimony:
Are just guidelines that you can give to the elderly so he can carry out their activities of daily living or even take preventive actions [...]. In cases such as the elderly who live alone, you’re giving the same guidelines regarding the prevention of falls, household accidents, guide the person who takes care of the elderly, too, is important. I think that’s it. (Dept. 8)

[...] If she needs help to feed, some care with medication, some care at home, which guide the care that must be, to have guided self-care [...]. (Dept. 9)

Based on the statements, the study shows that the biological decline of the body, designated by the aging process, causes aging of structures and the general appearance of the human body and the decline of physiological functions, making the dependent elderly to the realization of self-care.18 This finding raises and highlights the role of health professionals, especially nurses, education for self-care for the elderly, as they contribute to reducing disability and maintaining independence and autonomy of this population.

These reports lead us to discuss the next category, which considers the importance of providing care to the elderly for nursing students, based on their understanding.

Second Category: the importance of experience taking care of elderly patient during nursing internships.

In this category, it was possible to identify the importance attached by students to provide care to the elderly, during internships, for your professional future. They refer in their speeches that the academic experience provides a first contact with the elderly and allow them the acquisition and improvement of skills and skills of nursing under the Health of the Elderly, as observed in patient testimonials below:

[...] It is important because when we graduate, we will have, for sure, our experience in this patient. So we [...] this care practice and learn more. (Dept. 3)

[...] The elderly population is a population that is growing worldwide. [...] I think it is of paramount importance to us, as a nursing student, giving these guidelines already in the Academy, right? Since it will be a group that we will constantly deal with, since it is a population that is increasingly growing; it is a worldwide phenomenon [...] the aging population. So we have to be prepared to deal with this audience, we’ll often find ourselves. (Dept. 8)

On supervised internships in nursing study highlights the importance of these as a means for the acquisition and improvement of skills and skills of nursing.19 In this sense, research shows that with the nursing education in gerontology and geriatrics future nurses become more attentive to elderly care, preparing for the aging process and improve the relationship with the elderly near.20

At the same time, it becomes paramount awareness and maturity of the student as a caregiver perspective discussed in the following statement:

I think it’s very important for us to learn to be sensitive in caring, to have more attention to the most important requirements of care, and I think during the academic life and during the stages, we get to the more mature look for jobs, to identify any change. (Dept. 6)

In this context, it is noteworthy that the disciplines that address the theme of the elderly in nursing undergraduate courses, allow students to act in the spread of knowledge obtained by transmitting them to caregivers, family, society and graduate better prepared for professional deal with the needs of the elders. The notion that such disciplines allow a first contact the elderly public and provide the basis for developing a comprehensive and humane care is expressed in the following statements:

[...] we are in a learning phase, right? So, it is important for us to be able to experience [...] At least have a first contact, assess how that old lives, his conditions. And I think, with time, both during graduation as professional as you; we take care to know, really, the elderly. And have a previous contact [...], an initial contact [...]. (Dept. 1)

[...] It is very important for us to learn these specific things, specific to elderly care, because it is completely different from the adult. And if we go taking care of the same way you can go wrong. [...] (Dept. 4)

The importance for me is that I will learn just this differentiation of care, right? Of elderly patients with other patient’s care because it is different. (Dept. 5)

[...] Why have the physiological changes of the elderly, we have to differentiate changes due to disease. So, this contact during the academic life, we will have this differentiation to mature and learn to deal with the elderly. (Dept. 6)

[...] For my training, you know more elderly population, primarily because most of the population has specific care needs because they possess. [...] Are people who usually have more than one type of disease and...
need further observation, to be more careful … I think it is, it is important to nursing. (Dept. 9)

[...] Above all, offer a humanized aim biopsychosocial wellbeing and add to the learning experience of the student. (Dept. 10)

Based on these discourses, we infer that nursing students have understanding about the importance of curricular training in disciplines that address the health of the elderly and see it as a first contact with patients in this age group. The students also reported that the importance of the provision of elderly care as a nursing student is related to the possibility to differentiate the type of care provided according to the needs and peculiarities of the elderly.

This result is consistent with the results obtained in a study with students from the graduate nursing course in the State of Minas Gerais, where education is seen as a support for the planning and development of nursing care for the elderly.21

Based on the statements, we can say that the teaching of discipline for the Elderly interviewed students allowed, besides the acquisition of new knowledge related to the aging process, amplifying the sense of responsibility as future nurses in the health care of older people.

The students spoke about the role of nursing in promoting health and improving quality of life in this population. Such an understanding has been made explicit in the following excerpts.

[...] Requires more care, as well as health promotion for this population, since the end of life, the elderly need not only a better quality of life, but also be able to continue their lives, their activities of daily life [...] so that they are not prevented [disabled] or relying totally on other people, other persons in the case. (Dept. 7)

As a student, I think we can establish a plan of care for the elderly based on his needs, since I can specifically meet your every need. [...] We can do activities within the PSF or hospital to better evaluate what is the need of the elderly. (Dept. 9)

On this theme, the study highlights that the importance of providing care to the elderly, through internships, as well as being an important learning experience; it provides a first contact with the elderly patient. There was stated that the importance of the provision of elderly care nursing as a student is related to the possibility to differentiate the type of care provided according to the needs and peculiarities of the elderly, emphasizing health promotion and improvement of quality of life as relevant points to be considered in the implementation of quality care.

The statements, it was noted that the teaching of discipline for the Elderly interviewed students allowed, besides the acquisition of new knowledge related to the aging process, amplifying the sense of responsibility as future nurses in caring for the elderly. In addition, there is the interest of nursing students by area of health in the elderly, suggesting that possess the awareness that nursing professionals should provide a comprehensive and systematic assistance to this population.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study led to understand that the provision of care to elderly patient was seen by students as focused on the specifics of this group, such as physiological, psychological and emotional changes of the elderly. The students believe that these changes may directly affect the type and quality of care provided to the elderly and in communication with this patient.

This understanding of students suggests a breakthrough in the perspective of care for elderly patients, since one of the major difficulties faced by nurses is to provide care appropriate to the needs of the elderly.

Else part, the students highlighted the importance of providing care to the elderly, through internships, as well as being an important learning experience; it provides a first contact with the elderly patient. There was stated that the importance of the provision of elderly care nursing as a student is related to the possibility to differentiate the type of care provided according to the needs and peculiarities of the elderly, emphasizing health promotion and improvement of quality of life as relevant points to be considered in the implementation of quality care.

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