THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION AND THE NURSING PROCESS: BEYOND DUALISM BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

O EXAME FÍSICO E O PROCESSO DE ENFERMAGEM: PARA ALÉM DO DUALISMO ENTRE TEORIA E PRÁTICA

El Examen Físico y el Proceso de Enfermería: Más Allá del Dualismo Entre la Teoría y la Práctica

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to describe the articulation between the physical examination and the Nursing Process according to Horta, in the view of nursing graduates. Method: exploratory-descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, with a group of nursing students in 4th period, composed of young people of both sexes. For data collection, a semi-structured interview was performed. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, Opinion nº 01260258000-07. Results: data were grouped into thematic categories: The physical examination and steps of the Nursing Process according Wanda Horta; and techniques and technologies related to physical examination and to the nursing Process. Conclusion: the testimony of the students allowed to observe the relationship between the physical examination, the steps of the nursing process, according to Horta, as well as the instrumentation required for its development: the technique and technology. Descriptors: Nursing Process; Physical Examination; Nursing Education.

RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever a articulação entre o exame físico e o Processo de Enfermagem segundo Horta, na visão de graduados de enfermagem. Método: estudo exploratório-descriptivo, de abordagem qualitativa, com uma turma de graduandos de enfermagem do 4º período, composta por jovens de ambos os sexos. Para a coleta de dados, foi realizada uma entrevista semiestruturada. A pesquisa teve o projeto aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, Parecer nº 01260258000-07. Resultados: os dados foram agrupados em categorias temáticas: O exame físico e as etapas do Processo de Enfermagem segundo Wanda Horta; e As técnicas e tecnologias relacionadas ao exame físico e ao Processo de enfermagem. Conclusão: os depoimentos dos graduandos possibilitaram observar a relação entre o exame físico, as etapas do processo de enfermagem, segundo Horta, assim como a instrumentalização necessária ao seu desenvolvimento: a técnica e a tecnologia. Descritores: Processos de Enfermagem; Exame Físico; Educação em Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: describir la relación entre el examen físico y el Proceso de Enfermería según Horta, en la visión de los graduados de enfermería. Método: estudio exploratorio-descriptivo, con enfoque cualitativo, con un grupo de estudiantes de enfermería del cuarto periodo, compuesto por jóvenes de ambos sexos. Para la recopilación de los datos, se realizó una entrevista semi-estructurada. La investigación tuvo el proyecto aprobado por el Comité de Ética de la Investigación, Opinión nº 01260258000-07. Resultados: los datos fueron agrupados en categorías temáticas: El examen físico y las etapas del Proceso de Enfermería según Wanda Horta; y Las técnicas y tecnologías relacionadas al examen físico y al Proceso de enfermería. Conclusión: los testimonios de los alumnos permiten observar la relación entre el examen físico, las etapas del proceso de enfermería, según Horta, así como la instrumentalización necesaria para su desarrollo: la técnica y la tecnología. Descriptores: Procesos de Enfermería; Examen Físico; Educación en Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

A physical examination performed by the nurse aims to highlight useful information to the delineation of nursing problems and therefore, to direct assistance to the customer. Thus, it should constitute in the first step of a systematic assistance. Their improvement becomes increasingly necessary in teaching content to be taught at different levels of education, particularly at the undergraduate, to developed the skills for its execution, in a compatible level with the customers safety.

The Nursing Care Systematization (NCS) is used in practice by nurses through a scientific method or the method of problem solving that helps in the planning of care. This methodology is known as the Nursing Process.

Wanda de Aguiar Horta, an important Brazilian nurse theorist, sought throughout her career, to create and to transmit a concept of nursing encompassing aspects, often conflicting, of humanitarian art, science and profession. The Nursing Process, according to Horta, is still today, a tool for execution, organization and management of nursing work.

In the Nursing School of the University of São Paulo (USP), in 1959, Horta started developing the central core of her work that constituted in the elaboration of wide theoretical foundation for nursing, culminating in the elaboration of the Theory of Basic Human Needs. This theory is considered the high point of her work and the synthesis of all her searches.

The Theory of Basic Human Needs of Horta was structured from the work of psychologist Abraham Maslow. Both studious have postulated that all human beings share basic human needs. For Maslow, the needs exist for all human beings, however, he orders them hierarchically. The lower-level needs would be those related to survival, they need to be met continue the life and the human species. The needs of higher level begin with security and protection, and continue to higher values.

The pyramid of needs of Maslow became a familiar figure among health professionals and, although some of the needs are located at higher levels, they still are basic to every human being. Based on this pyramid, Horta divided the needs into three spheres: the sphere of psychobiological Needs; psychosocial Needs; and psycho-spiritual Needs.

The Nursing Process organized by Horta, based on the Theory of Basic Human Needs, have exactly, among other qualities and functions, the fact to become palpable, the nursing staff, the organization and the dynamism of the query, since this methodology is the dynamics of systematized and interrelated actions, aimed at assisting the human being and is characterized by the inter-relationship and dynamism of its phases or steps.

The phases of this process comprise the History of Nursing, Diagnosis, Care Plan, Evolution and Prognosis. The physical examination integrates the first phase, taking the form of a puzzle: from it, the data are listed (pieces) that will serve to mount the whole (nursing care).

The nursing process is an activity developed almost exclusively by nursing students, in a mechanical way, depersonalized and disconnected with professional services, complying with solely a task or activity course, for purposes of obtaining a evaluation ritual. This event discourages nurses in practice, since they spend to discredit and reflect the process as something laborious, boring and also, without glimmer ways for its implementation in the services. Based on this problem, this study aims to:

- To describe the articulation between the physical examination and the Nursing Process according to Horta, in the view of nursing students;
- To discuss this relationship, highlighting its relevance in teaching undergraduate nursing and its applicability to professional practice.

METHOD

Exploratory descriptive study with a qualitative approach, with a group of nursing students from the 4th period, of both sexes, aged between 20 to 27 years. As inclusion criteria for the study subjects, it was necessary that undergraduates were participating nursing consultations conducted with diabetic clients, in the Group of Diabetics of Antônio Pedro University Hospital (APUH), linked to the Fluminense Federal University (UFF).

The clinic of this hospital, research field, attend the population of the city of Niterói (RJ) and neighboring municipalities. The client profile of the Group of Diabetics APUH/UFF is, in short, adult-elderly, lower middle class, elementary education, who attend the service regularly, participating of consultations with doctors and nurses, and of activities in health education, coordinated by professors, graduate students and residents of the Nursing School Aurora Afonso Costa (EEAAC/UFF).
20 subjects were selected, by random sampling, four male and 16 female, belonging to the same class of undergraduate Course in nursing, and attended the subject Fundamentals of Nursing during the 2nd half of 2007, and agreed to participate in the research by signing the Informed Consent Form. In the study, were identified by the initial G (graduate). So, where is expressed, for example, G1, reads graduating 1, whose speeches were recognized in italics results.

For data collection, arranged of 48 hours of participant observation and individual interviews lasting approximately 25 minutes each. The semistructured interview consisted in a previously prepared script that served as guiding axis to its development favoring the participants’ answers to questions, without strict order, maintaining a flexibility degree, adapting to the respondent and thus allowing, the deepening of the studied theme.12 The realization of the physical examination for graduates was questioned, their relation to the methodology of Nursing Process and the artifices necessary for their full development.

The statements were recorded in Mp3 player technology and transcribed in full by the researchers in a hypertext. A exhaustive reading of this product, enabled the grouping of results into thematic categories, by the Content Analysis, analytical technique of communications based into systematic procedures for the content description of messages.13

The research project had the approval of the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine (APUH/UFF), issued on 11/09/07, with the No. 01260258000-07 and obeys the precepts of Resolution No. 196/96 of the National Health Council,14 which regulates the research involving human beings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Category Theme 1: The physical examination and the steps of the Nursing Process according to Wanda Horta

In this first thematic category, undergraduates highlighted the chained and organizational aspect of the Nursing Process, relating the physical examination to this, as a starting point for an orientated assistance:

The physical Exam, which is part of the historical, is one of the most important steps, so the realization of an appropriate physical examination leads to detection of a nursing diagnosis that can be properly treated. (G10)

We have to evaluate the physical condition of the patient, to observe abnormalities, looking for signs and symptoms to approach at a possible nursing diagnosis. (G9)

The statements of interviewees exalted the investigative aspect of the physical examination, as well as the interpretation of the findings in the formulation of nursing diagnoses. The diagnostic language follows a standardization aimed at the understanding among nurses from around the world: systems of Classification of Nursing Diagnoses (North American Nursing Diagnosis Association - NANDA), Nursing Interventions Classification (Nursing Interventions Classification - NIC) and Nursing Outcomes Classification (Nursing Outcomes Classification - NOC). Therefore, to the use of these systems properly, it is necessary an accurate physical examination.

The articulation of the steps of the nursing process, according to Wanda Horta, just happens through the influence of the execution associated with interpretation, critical judgment, that will provide the North to assistance, considering the coherence of the conclusions reached at each step throughout the process. Through these conclusions, the Care Plan will globally determine, the nursing care that human beings should receive before the established diagnosis.8 Therefore, the implementation of the assistance plan or care plan, will be characterized by the daily script or the appointed period, which coordinates the action of the nursing staff in the execution of appropriate care to attend the specific basic needs of human being.8,36

The care plan is evaluated always providing the necessary data for the fifth step or phase called nursing evolution, consisting of the diary report of the successive changes of the client. Finally, the prognosis will estimate the human being, to meet their basic needs, changed after the implementation of the care plan and in the data provided by the evolution of nursing.

The observations of the students about the usefulness of the inherent Process to consultation, especially related to physical examination, allowed to perceive that they understand the usefulness of organized consultation, recognize as a fundamental this work process and are able to establish the relation judgment-intervention-evaluation intrinsic to assistance development:

With the exam, I search to capture information capable of translating possible problems, take me to the interventions, to care and to evaluation. (G11)

The examination helps to know the natural history of the disease, stimulates the desire of anatomy knowledge through performed examinations; help with prescription and
nursing care; values the nursing actions. (G8)

Given the characteristics of the Nursing Process, Horta6,7,8-17 affirms that it is possible to correct errors in any of the phases and also the simultaneous prediction of all phases. During the teaching and learning of physical examination applied to the Process, undergraduates have the opportunity to establish this relationship, to realize that the Process has an order, however, does not shows rigidity in its execution, allowing the whole time, the possibility of critique and reflection, related with decisions:

After examining and making the plan of care, if the patient does not respond well to treatment, it is possible in a next appointment, to review the actions, examine and interpret again, to realize where there was some failure. (G5)

In the process steps that follow, we see the reflection of what we did before, so you can see what actions we take from then on, or what we should change what we've done. (G7)

The testimonies showed, as in other studies,15-6 that the use of Nursing Process with critical thinking, requires knowledge. The performance of the physical examination involves the use of content learned during the graduating classes in anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, symptomatology, requiring also to link teaching of social sciences such as sociology and anthropology; understanding of the culture, viewed relational, communicative and ethical aspects emerged during the contact between nurse and client.1 The development of the Nursing Process incites a substantial base, which demonstrates, on this perspective, its large dimension.

- Category Theme 2: The technical and technologies related to the physical examination and the nursing Process

By relating the phases and realize the functionality of each, the graduates noted that, intrinsic to this trajectory, there are facilitators instruments that enable not only the discovery and interpretation of the findings during the physical examination, as well as the development of the Nursing Process.

It helps if the environment has good lighting, silence, privacy and comfort for patients. (G11)

Must have scientific background, mastery of technique, safety, empathy, observation, communication. (G1)

Horta theorizes that the nurse provides the tools required to be able to assist with the quality expected from a professional. These, known as basic instruments, are the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for the performance of an activity. The instruments do not have a hierarchy in the importance, because everyone has a fundamental value in the process, as observation, communication, application of the scientific method, application of scientific principles, manual dexterity, planning, evaluation, creativity, teamwork, resource community.4

Undergraduates valorized, among these instruments, manual dexterity related to semiotic techniques and scientific principles that argue about these techniques:

Content domain, dexterity, security, support from teachers. (G15) Observation and communication mainly. (G4)

Application of techniques and technologies, scientific knowledge, safety when dealing with the patient. (G5)

Such behavior exalts the technical and technological character of the physical examination. Hiller defines the technique as man's effort to employ the mental faculties to dominate and become usable the matter and its forces, i.e., what is found in nature.17-12 In this sense, the technique is a skill, an art that goes beyond the realm of ideas of the productive act17-14, required for activities, such as the painting technique, breathing technique and intellectual work technique. The technique - consisting of technology - is part of the artistic process, demands a special skill to execute or do something specific of a given profession, as well as the technique of physical examination, based on a specific technology, comprise the exercise not only of nursing, like other health careers.18

The technology corresponds to the scientific knowledge in the exercise of technique, involving apparatus and/or methods. It is used in scientific principles of bio-physic anatomy, the psycho social anthropology, of devices and machines of various complexities that assist in the diagnosis of installed situation.18 This association is described by undergraduates:

To mix the theoretical knowledge and the practice is to use technology and technique. For example, to make the monofilament test. If the result is not satisfactory, the patient may have neuropathy. I hear this because I studied that Diabetes interferes with neurogenic function. But I also need to know how to do the test correctly, i.e., the technique. (G7)

To handle the technique I have to employ the appropriate technology. (G2)

The inspection, palpation, percussion and auscultation are defined as basic skills for physical examination.19-20 The techniques employed to use these instruments resulted
from experiments that are based on scientific knowledge. The use of special equipment such as stethoscope, ophthalmoscope, monofilament, complement these instruments allowing details definition. It is understood, on this line of thought, that the physical examination involves the association of techniques and technologies peculiar to it.

When performing the technique of cardiac auscultation, for example, it is necessary to know the location of heart sounds (anatomy), the function of each (physiology), the heart frequency values considered normal, the influence of prior disease on the individual cardiac output, use of medications such as digitalis, diuretics, blood pressure regulators (pharmacology) etc.

The customer care is the largest technology that nursing holds. When preparing a silent, restricted, clean environment and with adequate lighting for the examination, it gives the customer peace, privacy and trust. The silent environment will help, not only in the correct perception of the heartbeat, but also enable the patient to realize how professional attend them. Technologies, therefore, wander the fields of both operational science as the space relationship between nurse and client.

**FINAL REMARKS**

Through the testimonies of undergraduates, we observed the relationship between the physical examination, the steps of the nursing process, according to Wanda Horta, as well as the instrumentation required for its development: the technique and technology. Students recognized the utility of this process and the central link of it: the customer. They understood its usefulness on the welfare of this, properly combining technique and technology and applying the various stages of the Process.

For undergraduates, the Nursing Process improves the quality, interactivity and the multidimensionality of health care in the health context, and provide direction for the organization of the health care system and assign the professional autonomy, which can also be confirmed by researches already performed.

The teaching of content about physical examination and the nursing process should be developed seeking the relationship with the professional nursing practice. Undergraduates that participated in the research, had the opportunity to perform consultations, apply the process and judge the results of care through the planning that they built.

There is a strengthening of the conception of the physical examination, as a fundamental aspect in the nursing process, because it is another way to build the complex nurse-client relationship. It was clear that the teaching of physical examination and the nursing process are not considered by students as mere academic formality with evaluative purposes, neither as submission process of clientele, so that it simply accepted interventions imposed on them, without any questioning, discussion or negotiation. For these students, the physical examination in a mechanical way, depersonalized and disjointed services, complying with only an academic task, with the purpose of obtaining an evaluation ritual, does not contribute to changes in the quality of life of individuals, nor to the reorientation of practices health.

It is also worth noting that the teaching of nursing undergraduate, still suffers strong influence of the traditional model. The existing dualism between theory and practice is commonly one of the factors highlighted as obstacles in the construction of specific knowledge and with a critical vision. The disarticulated optics of the nursing curricula makes some content, treated in universities, only reach the techniques teaching and technologies that produce and transform health practices.

**REFERENCES**


