

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of health professionals

Impacto da pandemia da Covid-19 na saúde mental dos profissionais de saúde

Impacto de la pandemia Covid-19 en la salud mental de los profesionales de la salud

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RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar as questões relacionadas à saúde mental dos profissionais de enfermagem durante a pandemia do Sars-Cov-2, identificando as principais doenças mentais acometidas e destacando a participação dos Programas Nacionais de Saúde para minimizar os impactos da pandemia sobre esses profissionais. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo de revisão bibliográfica realizado nas bases de dados Pubmed, SciELO-Brasil e Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde nos anos de 2020 e 2021. **Resultados:** Foram selecionados dez artigos referentes ao tema e, após interpretação destes, notou-se um aumento de transtorno de ansiedade e depressão entre os profissionais, com impacto à sua saúde mental nesse cenário pandêmico devido a sua atuação na linha de frente. **Conclusão:** a saúde mental dos profissionais de enfermagem durante a pandemia parecer ter sido comprometida, com impacto potencial à qualidade da assistência ao paciente.

Descritores: Saúde mental; Pandemia; COVID-19; Enfermagem; Profissionais.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the issues related to the mental health of nursing professionals during the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic, identifying the main mental illnesses affected and highlighting the participation of national health programs to minimize the impacts of the pandemic on these professionals. **Method:** This is a bibliographic review study conducted in the Pubmed, SciELO-Brazil and Virtual Health Library databases in 2020 and 2021. **Results:** Ten articles on the theme were selected and, after interpreting these, an increase in anxiety and depression disorder was noticed among professionals, with an impact on their mental health in this pandemic scenario due to their performance on the front line. **Conclusion:** the mental health of nursing professionals during the pandemic seems to have been compromised, with a potential impact on the quality of patient care.

Descriptors: Mental health; Pandemic; COVID-19; Nursing; Professionals.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar los temas relacionados con la salud mental de los profesionales de enfermería durante la pandemia de Sars-Cov-2, identificando las principales enfermedades mentales afectadas y destacando la participación de programas nacionales de salud para minimizar los impactos de la pandemia en estos profesionales. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio de revisión bibliográfica realizado en las bases de datos Pubmed, SciELO-Brasil y Biblioteca Virtual en Salud en 2020 y 2021. **Resultados:** Se seleccionaron diez artículos sobre el tema y, tras interpretarlos, se notó un aumento del trastorno de ansiedad y depresión entre los profesionales, con impacto en su salud mental en este escenario de pandemia debido a su desempeño en primera línea. **Conclusión:** la salud mental de los profesionales de enfermería durante la pandemia parece haberse visto comprometida, con un impacto potencial en la calidad de la atención al paciente.

Descritores: Salud mental; Pandemia; COVID-19; Enfermería; Profesionales.

Introduction

Viruses have been around for a long time in nature, specifically in wild animals. Following the story line, with population growth and the proximity of man to wild animals, the viruses mutated until they managed to infect the human body and multiply.¹

Thus, man's contact with wild animals has become increasingly favorable to the reproduction environment of viral diseases, resulting in the spread of transmissible diseases that affect the respiratory tract. Therefore, these evils were responsible for epidemics and pandemics throughout history.² An epidemic is defined as the advance of a certain disease in a delimited area in a short period; when these diseases affect different countries and different people, it is called a pandemic.³

In this context, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the COVID-19 outbreak as the 6th Public Health Emergency of International Importance after H1N1 (2009); Poliomyelitis (2014); Ebola in West Africa (2014); Zika (2016) and Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2019); and, recently, COVID-19 (2020).⁴

Thus, it was possible to observe the contemporary scenario of world health caused by the new coronavirus, the generator of COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease-19). Checking seven currently known coronavirus strains, including the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Sars-Cov, Mers-Cov and Sars-Cov-2.⁵

It was first notified on December 31, 2019, in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. In Brazil, the Ministry of Health reported the first case on February 26, 2020, in the city of São Paulo. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a state of pandemic for COVID-19 and recommended social isolation.⁶

According to the WHO, 80% of cases are asymptomatic - without symptoms - or may be oligosymptomatic - few symptoms - and 20% require specialized hospital care. Its transmission occurs mainly through the respiratory tract and through the inhalation of droplets and/or aerosols. We can mention that the main symptoms of COVID-19 are: cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat, difficulty breathing, loss of smell (anosmia), change in taste (ageusia), gastrointestinal disturbances, tiredness (asthenia), decreased appetite (lack of appetite), shortness of breath (dyspnea), which can even cause severe pneumonia.⁷

According to the Ministry of Health, of the 601,574 deaths that occurred between 2020 and 2021 in Brazil, the Federal Council of Nursing - COFEN, 866 cases occurred with specialists in the field of nursing who were on the front line fighting COVID-19, such as: nurses, technicians, nursing assistants and midwives, representing 0.144% of obituaries.⁷⁻⁸

COFEN data show that there are 2,564,908 registered health professionals in Brazil. Comparing the global number with data from COFEN, the number of nursing professionals' victims of SARS-Cov-2 represents 426.366% of deaths and of nurses 104,799%.⁹

In general, the COVID-19 pandemic causes several damages, in addition to compromising health, it also affects socioeconomic variables. In the field of health professionals, specifically nursing professionals, who are responsible for performing highly complex procedures, for this, it requires a technique that

requires scientific knowledge and immediate decision-making, they are professionals who are at the bedside 24 hours a day, increasing the risk of contagion for both the health worker and third parties.¹⁰

As this is a virus in which its transmission takes place through droplets and/or aerosols, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is necessary. However, the precariousness, and even its lack, increases the insecurity and anguish of the nursing teams. Double shifts, or even triple shifts, as they are excessive, constantly exhausting hours, increase physical and psychological suffering.¹⁰

Given the above, the vulnerability of nursing professionals, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, can generate strain on their mental health.

Thus, the reflection remains: what is the direct relationship of the pandemic, the socioeconomic system and the stress suffered by health professionals and the prevention of their mental health?

Therefore, the aim of this study was to analyze the issues related to the mental health of nursing professionals during the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic, identifying the main mental illnesses affected and highlighting the participation of National Health Programs to minimize the impacts of the pandemic on these professionals.

Method

This is a bibliographical, descriptive and qualitative study, based on research of articles published in renowned journals, with the purpose of evaluating the worsening of the mental health status of the nursing teams, highlighting the diseases that stand out most for this reason of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to constant debates both in the social and professional environment and in the media.

In order to decide which studies would be included in this article, the means to be followed to identify relevant issues, as well as the data to be taken from each selected subject, we established the development of a guiding question, which is considered the most important part of the literature review. Thus, the following question was obtained: what is the direct relationship between the pandemic, the socioeconomic system and the stress suffered by health professionals and the prevention of their mental health?

Data were collected using the following tools: Pubmed, SciELO-Brasil, BVS, COFEN, Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, using the following descriptors: "mental health", "pandemic", "COVID-19", "nursing" and "professionals". The documented materials, as well as the respective analyses, were organized in reports that make up the present study.

In the construction of this article, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used, and articles whose full texts were accessible, in Portuguese and English, in the period from 2020 to 2021, were evaluated. 2020, in languages other than Portuguese and English, which are not related to the study in progress, it was preferred not to include theses, dissertations and monographs.

With the parameters used, 14 articles were found in the Pubmed database, 11 articles in the Scielo-Brasil database, 127 articles in the VHL database, totaling 152. The articles analyzed that performed the specifications with the criteria of inclusion were 52 articles reached and studied in full.

Continuously, systematic readings were performed and only ten articles met the inclusion criteria.

Results and Discussion

Overview of selected articles

Ten articles were identified in this integrative review, interpreted and reduced by comparing the data exposed in the investigation of the theoretical framework, according to chart 1.

The study method was based on research, in which scientific articles corresponded to 10% - descriptive, quantitative and retrospective cross-sectional study; 10% - narrative review; 10% - cross-sectional and descriptive study; 10% - sectional study; 10% - technical-scientific literature review; 30% - reflection studies; and 20% exploratory analysis articles, descriptive of a quantitative approach.

Since, among the articles included in this literature review: three address Burnout Syndrome; six, depression; seven, anxiety; nine, occupational stress; one, post-traumatic disorder - PTSD; one, obsessive compulsive disorder - OCD.

Chart 1- Distributions of articles found from database searches, according to the name of the authors, article, journal, year of publication and its purpose. 2021

N	YEAR	TITLE	JOURNAL	AUTHORS	OBJECTIVE
1	2020	The Impact of Covid19 on the Work of Brazilian Nursing: Epidemiologic al Aspects	Focused Nursing	Nascimento VF, Espinosa MM, Silva MCN, Freire NP, Trette ACPT	To analyze epidemiological aspects of COVID-19 infection in nursing professionals during the emergence of the pandemic in Brazilian territory in 2020
2	2020	Repercussions of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Nursing Workes	Journal of Nursing of the Midwest of Minas Gerais	Luz EMF, Munhoz OL, Morais BX	Reflect on the repercussions of COVID-19 on the health of nursing workers.
3	2020	Psychosocial Support and Mental Health for Workers Nursing	Focused Nursing	Moreira AS, Lucca SR	Describe and discuss the performance of nursing professionals, their exposure to risk factors at work and the importance of psychosocial support in the COVID-19 pandemic.
4	2020	Tolerance Levels in Friendship Relationships of Health Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Revisa	Silva RM, Moraes- Filho IM, Valóta IAC, Saura APNS, Costa ALS, Sousa TV, Carvalho-Filha FSS, Carvalho CR.	To analyze the level of tolerance in friendly relationships among health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic

5	2021	Depression and Anxiety in Nursing Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Anna Nery School	Santos KMR, Galvão MHR, Gomes SM, Souza, TA, Medeiros, Arthur, A, Barbosa, IR	To analyze the prevalence of symptoms of depression, anxiety and associated factors in Arthur's nursing staff during the COVID-19 pandemic
6	2021	Strategic Empathic Listening to Welcoming Nursing Professionals in Confronting the Coronavirus Pandemic	Reben	Tobase L, Cardoso SH, Rodrigues RTF, Peres HHC	Reflect on the use of empathic listening as a strategy for welcoming nursing professionals in facing the challenges during the coronavirus pandemic.
7	2020	Nursing in the Times of COVID-19 in Brazil: a look at the Management of the Work	Focused Nursing	Machado MH	To analyze the situation of the nursing team in the context of the pandemic in Brazil, focusing on the management of the work of these professionals.
8	2020	Mortality of Nursing Professionals by COVID-19 in 2020: Brazil, United States, Spain and Italy	Revisa	Benito LAO, Palmeiras AML, Karnikowski MGO, Silva ICR	To analyze the mortality of nursing professionals (NP) by COVID-19 in Brazil (BRA), United States (EUS), Spain (ESP) and Italy (ITA) in the first half of 2020.
9	2020	Mortality of Nursing Professionals by COVID-19 in 2020	Revisa	Benito LAO, Palmeiras AML, Karnikowski MGO, Silva ICR	To analyze the mortality of nursing professionals (NP) by COVID-19 in the first half of 2020.
10	2020	Mental Health and Interventions Psychological in the face of Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)	Campinas Psychology Study	Schmidt B, Crepaldi MA, Bolze SDA, Neiva-Silva L, Demenech LM	Systematize knowledge about implications for mental health and psychological interventions in the face of the new coronavirus pandemic

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of health professionals

The COVID-19 pandemic gave visibility to health professionals (HP), especially the nursing staff. The year 2020 was considered by the WHO as the “International Year of Nurses and Midwives”, due to the 200 years of Florence Nightingale, which was marked by a pandemic.¹¹

When comparing the circumstances of COVID-19 with other pandemics, we note that this is a serious phase that the world is experiencing. As a result, the need for highly complex care to meet all those affected by this disease increased. Taking care of human needs is a function of nursing. As the largest category within hospitals, they gained greater recognition and responsibility during the pandemic.¹²

Under the circumstances of COVID-19, workers underwent sudden changes in their work routine, whether public or private, having to adapt to new demands and work demands. The resizing and restructuring of human and material resources, elaboration and implementation of protocols, among others. Health professionals are under pressure to develop productivity and results, along with the risk of virus infection.¹²

Therefore, nursing, in addition to suffering from the overload of hours worked, lack of resources and devaluation, there is still bullying, as 90% of nursing professionals are women. It is noteworthy that there is still a culture that the woman is responsible for the housework related to the monitoring of children, marriage and the home. These factors corroborate the emergence of disorders.¹³

Because they are professionals who are in direct contact with patients in a state of suffering and because they are facing the pandemic, the high risks of mental illness are intensified. Work overload, devaluation, lack of personal protective equipment - PPE, unhealthy working conditions, social distance, the large number of contaminated professionals and the fear of contagion contribute to physical and psychological exhaustion.¹⁴

Due to unhealthy conditions and the lack of adequate equipment, the Federal Council of Nursing (COFEN) has carried out inspections to verify working conditions and PPEs, where there is a considerable number of shortages of professionals on leave, which can trigger a collapse in the Health System. Health.¹⁵

Professionals who are daily exposed to traumatic and challenging situations, developing mental disorders - generalized anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), Burnout syndrome (professional exhaustion), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - which can thus lead to suicide.^{13,16}

Nursing professionals have a greater tendency to develop some mental disorder, depression being one of the three main ones. Lack of recognition and stress at work are factors that contribute to this diagnosis.¹⁵

Still in this perspective, depression and anxiety are the factors that most affect nursing professionals. Such phenomena are linked to the work routine, since, at the present time, many people are lost and these professionals end up being emotionally affected, given the drama of families and even their relatives. Allied to this, there is an excess of demand on the part of society, which is in

panic and despair. Also, this labor crisis corroborates the demands of the public power, which, for the most part, does not provide adequate resources for the least amount of assistance possible¹⁵.

As it has become a problem with great worldwide demand for mental health care, in some countries there is a classification of psychological vulnerability, which placed health professionals and infected people in social isolation as priorities for receiving psychological care.¹³

Thus, the emotional wear of the nursing professional, when treating a patient with COVID-19, for being in isolation from the physical contact of their family members during hospitalization, and when a sedation/intubation procedure has to be performed, a bond of care and affection with the sick.¹⁷

Comprehensive patient care has generated work overload for nursing professionals, as they spend more time and have direct contact with infected patients. Allied to this, there is the exposure of biological materials, invasive procedures, vulnerability to contamination, aggravating the emotional state, which may lead to idealization of suicide.¹⁸

In Brazil, for better management, the "COVID-19 Crisis Committee" and the "Nursing Observatory" were created by the COREN/COFEN committee in May 2020, where data on professionals infected with the coronavirus are registered, informed by the health service. There were 58,845 reported cases and 89 deaths.¹⁹

COFEN, in conjunction with the National Committee on Mental Health Nursing, has offered virtual assistance to nursing professionals who work on the front lines during the pandemic, carried out 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing five nurses to provide assistance simultaneous.¹⁵

In order to offer support to health professionals who are on the "front line" against COVID-19, the Ministry of Health published, on March 31, 2020, Ordinance No. 639, which provides for strategic action, a program entitled "Brazil counts on me Health Professionals", with the purpose of reducing the stress of health workers. This program aims to reduce the impact that the pandemic has had on health professionals, specifically the damage to mental health and also prevention, in order to better deal with the psychological pressure in the management of patients.²⁰

Conclusion

Therefore, with the pandemic scenario, there were not only physical health problems, but also emotional and mental health problems, with the fear of contagion and transmission of the virus as determining factor. In addition to being at risk, they have their personal, professional, family and friends lives, which creates more concern.

Regarding the form of transmission and prevention of contamination between health professionals and society, it led to an increase in the shortage of employees, even causing deaths. This scenario caused in the referred professionals: chronic stress, physical and mental exhaustion, contributing to the aggravation and increase of psychosomatic and mental illnesses.

In summary, it can be asserted that the pandemic showed the importance of health professionals for the general population, especially nursing teams, as they are the first to have contact with patients infected by Sars-Cov-2.

With the described scenario, a greater technical-scientific value is expected, a proportional increase in the number of nursing staff, a review of the working hours, as well as improvements in their conditions and the expansion of support programs for the prevention of mental health.

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