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Impacts of mourning experience on pandemic COVID-19 and mental health of nursing team?

¿Impactos de la experiencia de luto en la pandemia de la COVID-19 y en la salud mental del equipo de enfermería?
Vivências de luto e saúde mental da enfermagem na pandemia da COVID-19: o que nos diz a literatura?

ABSTRACT

Objective: to map the existing evidence in the literature on the grief experienced by nursing professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic and to discuss the repercussions for their mental health. **Method:** an integrative review performed in the Pubmed, Cinahl, Scopus and Lilacs databases, reaching a total of 198 publications. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a corpus of 04 articles was obtained. **Results:** The analyzed studies were carried out in Brazil and the United Kingdom. Two studies investigated aspects of mental health in coping with Covid-19 specific to the nursing team, one addressed all health professionals and the other surveyed health professionals and the general population. **Conclusion:** living with situations of mourning gives rise to feelings that affect the mental health of nursing professionals. The need for further studies to promote actions to support the experience of mourning in the pandemic is highlighted.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing, Team; Bereavement; Mental Health; COVID-19.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: mapear la evidencia existente en la literatura sobre el duelo experimentado por los profesionales de enfermería durante la pandemia Covid-19 y discutir las repercusiones para su salud mental. **Método:** revisión integradora realizada en las bases de datos Pubmed, Cinahl, Scopus y Lilacs, alcanzando un total de 198 publicaciones. Luego de aplicar los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se obtuvo un corpus de 04 artículos. **Resultados:** Los estudios analizados se realizaron en Brasil y Reino Unido. Dos estudios investigaron aspectos de la salud mental en el afrontamiento de Covid-19 específicos del equipo de enfermería, uno se dirigió a todos los profesionales de la salud y el otro a los profesionales de la salud encuestados y a la población en general. **Conclusión:** convivir con situaciones de duelo genera sentimientos que afectan la salud mental de los profesionales de enfermería. Se destaca la necesidad de realizar más estudios para promover acciones que apoyen la experiencia del duelo en la pandemia.

DESCRIPTORES: Grupo de Enfermería; Aflicción; Salud Mental; COVID-19.

RESUMO

Objetivo: mapear as evidências existentes na literatura sobre os lutos vividos pelos profissionais de enfermagem durante a pandemia da Covid-19 e discutir sobre as repercussões para sua saúde mental. **Método:** revisão integrativa realizada nas bases de dados Pubmed, Cinahl, Scopus e Lilacs, alcançando um total de 198 publicações. Após aplicação dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão, obteve-se um corpus de 04 artigos. **Resultados:** Os estudos analisados foram realizados no Brasil e no Reino Unido. Dois estudos investigaram aspectos da saúde mental no enfrentamento da Covid-19 específicos para a equipe de enfermagem, um abordou todos os profissionais de saúde e o outro pesquisou os profissionais de saúde e a população em geral. **Conclusão:** a convivência com situações de luto faz emergir sentimentos que repercutem na saúde mental dos profissionais de enfermagem. Destaca-se a necessidade de mais estudos que fomentem ações de apoio a vivência de luto na pandemia.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Equipe de enfermagem; Luto; Saúde mental; COVID-19.

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Kalyne Patricia de Macedo Rocha

Graduate student in Nursing, University student, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.
ORCID: 0000-0002-8557-1616

Wanessa Cristina Tomaz dos Santos Barros

Nurse, PhD in Nursing, University Professor, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.
ORCID:0000-0002-1924-3278

Luciane Paula B. Araújo de OliveiraNurse, PhD in Nursing. University Professor, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.
ORCID:0000-0003-1629-8991**José Jailson de Almeida Júnior**Nurse, Doctor of Education. University Professor, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.
ORCID: 0000-0001-7448-0703**INTRODUCTION**

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covid-19 Pandemic. Since then, around the world, nurses and nursing technicians have been honored for their work and commitment to providing care. However, this experience has been permeated by a range of experiences that generate fear, insecurity, losses and suffering.¹

The pandemic brought with it concerns about the supply of personal protective equipment; possibility of disability with the new disease and also with new sectors of work; lack of knowledge about forms of contagion and specific medications; shortage of Intensive Care Unit beds and mechanical ventilators; work overload and the most challenging of all issues: ignorance about a dangerous disease that lethally affected thousands of health professionals worldwide and that puts the worker as a possible vector of contamination for his family. These situations led to distance from family members, fear, anguish and feelings of uncertainty and social stigmatization.²

In this context, as the pandemic progresses, nurses are crossed by experiences that evoke feelings of grief. Grief is understood as the loss of something or someone important; a response to breaking a significant bond. It is believed that the way the nursing team experiences the grieving process in the pandemic can affect their mental health.

Nurses and technicians have experienced more frequent deaths in their daily lives than those with which they are used to dealing, in addition to the absence or modification of funeral rituals. The absence of rituals, in addition to social distance, lead to a feeling of loneliness, grief overload and emotional exhaustion.³ An inadequate response to grief exposes pro-

professionals to an increased risk of suffering/ mental disorders, persistent grief and a prolonged grieving process.⁴ In addition, there is the risk of the so-called second wave of Covid-19, which consists of psychological health problems, which in health professionals is manifested by the intertwining between tiredness and the feeling of helplessness.⁵

Therefore, studying the implications of bereavement experiences on the mental health of the nursing team is essential to conduct care strategies and protect professionals. Among the various public health measures in the face of a pandemic, the psycho-emotional protection of health professionals is certainly one of the most important.

At this moment when the uncertainties about Covid-19 begin to diminish and the physical and material resources of health care are more organized, concerns about the psychological adjustment and the recovery of the professionals who are exposed physically and emotionally when facing COVID-19.⁶

Given the above, it is questioned what scientific knowledge has been produced so far about the grief experienced by nursing professionals in times of COVID-19? The aim of this study is to map the evidence in the literature on the grief experienced by nursing professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic and to discuss the repercussions for their mental health.

METHOD

This is an integrative literature review study. The guarantee of scientific and methodological rigor of the study was supported and adapted from the recommendations of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI)⁷ and of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-

-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR)⁸ in addition to a pre-established protocol and following the steps of the review: elaboration of the research question; sample selection, that is, primary studies; data extraction; critical analysis of the included studies; synthesis, interpretation and interpretation of the results of the review; presentation of the data found.⁹

The research question was elaborated by the PICO strategy, which advocates the following fundamental elements: P - Population; I - Interest; and Co - Context. Thus, the elements were defined: P - nursing team; I - mourning experiences; and Co - COVID-19.¹⁰

The study in question aims to map the existing evidence in the literature on the grief experienced by nursing professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic and to discuss the repercussions for their mental health.

The inclusion criteria adopted were articles available in full, published between the years 2019 and 2020, referring to the theme of the study. The adopted time frame is justified by the fact that 2019 was the year of the discovery of the Sars-cov-19 virus, which a few months later, would be responsible for the referred pandemic. The exclusion criteria were duplicate publications (duplicate manuscripts were considered only once, being counted in the database with the highest number of references (12). No language filter was used.

The search was carried out in November 2020 in the databases Pubmed, Cinahl, Scopus and Lilacs, through the descriptors of the international vocabulary used in the health area - the Medical Subject Heading (MeSH): Coronavirus Infections; bereavement; nursing; Mental Health, combined by the Boolean operator AND.

The selection of studies took place

following three steps: reading the titles and abstracts and excluding those that did not meet the eligibility criteria; reading in full the pre-selected studies; eligibility of studies that met the inclusion criteria and make up the final study sample.¹¹

After reading the studies in their entirety, the results were analyzed and described. The data were extracted by one reviewer, confirmed by a second reviewer

and the differences resolved by consensus between the authors. As for the treatment of data, it is emphasized that the information collected was organized in a synoptic table containing the title of the article, objective, method, main results and impressions of the reviewers. The findings were analyzed according to the research question, presented through tables and synthesized in a narrative way.

It should be noted that review studies do not require approval by research ethics committees. At the same time, it is ensured that the ethical aspects regarding scientific rigor were strictly followed by the authors.

RESULTS

The survey sample is represented in Figure 1 by means of a flowchart that elucidates the selection of articles in each database through steps.

The studies included in the summary of this review (chart 1) were selected from the Lilacs (03) and Cinahl (01) databases. The surveys were published in Brazil and the United Kingdom. As for the objective, 02 studies investigated aspects of mental health in coping with Covid-19 specific to the nursing team, 01 study addressed all health professionals and 01 researched health professionals and the general population.

No study made explicit reference to the grieving process and its repercussions on mental health. However, taking the definition adopted in the research on screen, the experiences of mourning that predicted mental suffering were highlighted (chart 2).

Figure 1- Flowchart of the process of identification, selection and inclusion of studies.

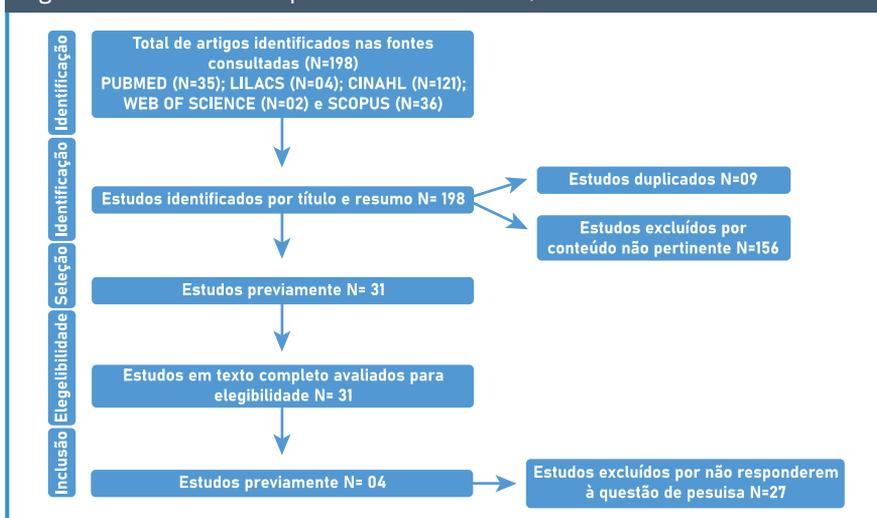


Chart 1 - Synthesis of selected articles on experiences of mourning by nursing professionals during the covid-19 pandemic.

ESTUDO	TÍTULO DO ARTIGO	PAÍS DE ORIGEM/ PERIÓDICO	OBJETIVOS/ DESENHO DE ESTUDO	DESEFECHO/CONCLUSÕES
E1	Saúde mental dos profissionais de saúde na China durante pandemia do novo coronavírus: revisão integrativa	Brasil	Identificar as publicações relacionadas com a saúde mental dos profissionais de saúde atuantes diante da pandemia de COVID-19 revisão integrativa.	Os textos trazem reflexões principalmente quanto a Insuficiência de treinamentos e equipamentos de proteção individual no combate à COVID-19; Sentimentos dos profissionais de saúde no combate à COVID-19; Necessidade de apoio psicológico/psiquiátrico aos profissionais.
E2	Fatores de estresse nos profissionais de enfermagem no combate à pandemia da COVID-19: síntese de evidências	Brasil	Identificar os principais efeitos psicológicos da pandemia da COVID-19 nos profissionais de enfermagem; descrever os principais fatores capazes de gerar estresse psicológico nos profissionais de enfermagem; descrever as estratégias de coping para o combate ao estresse emocional. revisão da literatura	o aumento da carga de trabalho, medo de contaminar os familiares e de se contaminar, desinformação e raiva do governo e dos sistemas de saúde são os principais fatores capazes de gerar estresse emocional nos profissionais de enfermagem. É mister reconhecer e acolher os sentimentos dos profissionais de enfermagem e proporcionar uma esfera de estabilidade em meio à crise

E3	Saúde mental de profissionais de enfermagem durante a pandemia de COVID-19: recursos de apoio	Brasil	Refletir sobre as implicações da pandemia de coronavírus na saúde mental dos profissionais de enfermagem e os principais recursos de apoio em desenvolvimento. artigo reflexivo	A experiência de trabalhar na pandemia atual tem impactos físicos, emocionais, econômicos, sociais e psicológicos. É importante entender e identificar repercussões psicológicas e é preciso levar em consideração as principais implicações e emoções envolvidas antes, durante e após o evento
E4	Bereavement Support on the Frontline of COVID-19: Recommendations for Hospital Clinicians.	Reino Unido	Revisar as evidências de pesquisa relevantes e fornecer recomendações baseadas em evidências e recursos para os profissionais de saúde mitigarem os resultados ruins do luto e apoiar a equipe. Revisão	As recomendações incluem cuidado prévio planejamento; comunicação proativa, sensível e regular com os membros da família juntamente com o fornecimento de informações precisas; habilitando família membros para se despedirem pessoalmente sempre que possível; suporte à comunicação virtual; fornecendo excelente gerenciamento de sintomas e emocionais e suporte espiritual; e fornecer e / ou sinalizar serviços de luto

Chart 2 – Issues related to bereavement experiences found in the selected articles.

ESTUDO	VIVÊNCIAS DE LUTO
E1	Alguns profissionais de cuidados intensivos se demitiram por falta de EPI ou condições de trabalho
E2	Perda de pessoas próximas; perda dos meios de subsistência; exclusão social por estar associado à doença.
E3	Falta de contato com a família Pensamentos recorrentes sobre a pandemia e o processo de morte e morrer Estigmas, medos e riscos de trabalhar com pacientes com medo de adoecer e morrer
E4	interrupção das redes de apoio social dos parentes

DISCUSSION

The nursing team, in its work process, is the one that spends the most time in providing direct care to patients with Covid-19. However, this care is not restricted to technical care, but involves its psychological and emotional aspects of patient support, while experiencing the fear of becoming ill, of dying and of the contamination of family members and colleagues.¹²

Several situations can influence the way mourning is experienced and managed and, consequently, contribute to the development of normal mourning, as well as complicated mourning or anticipatory mourning. Anticipatory mourning concerns the separation of a member who is at high probability of death and thus anticipates the loss. Prolonged mourning lasts for more than 6 months and, in this case, the mourner shows intense signs of sadness, se-

paration anguish, loss and feelings of emptiness or lack of meaning in life.¹³

In typical situations, 10% of mourners have prolonged grieving disorder. Another fact that deserves to be highlighted is the possibility of post-traumatic stress, however, no studies were found on its incidence during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the studies analyzed, the experiences of mourning during the Covid-19 pandemic seem to be permeated by feelings of fear, helplessness, hopelessness, moral suffering, stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, Burnout and impotence. It is important to highlight that all these feelings are linked to suicide risk factors among nursing professionals, a complex, multidimensional problem that is increasingly common in our country and that, despite its importance, remains silent in the field of institutional taboos.¹⁴

The studies also provide some protection recommendations for the mental health

of nursing professionals. These relate to support by call centers in several countries around the world, with emphasis on the national initiatives of the Federal Council of Nursing (COFEN), which has a group of specialist nurses in mental health to provide free and real-time assistance to colleagues who need help. In the period between May and September, there was also a channel with psychologists and psychiatrists available for teleconsultation, made available by the Ministry of Health. There is also a recommendation that the worker monitor himself for possible signs and symptoms of worsening mental health.¹²

In this context, self-care strategies, signs and symptoms management, emotional support and resilience strategies are indicated. On the other hand, it is emphasized that these strategies should no longer be the responsibility of professionals who are in charge of care, but an

organizational response that offers emotional support to workers so that they can prevent and avoid suffering.¹²

It is necessary to develop strategies that consider all of these factors, especially the workload for long hours, absence of rest and psychological counseling, in order to avoid emotional exhaustion of workers¹⁶, in addition to welcoming feelings and generating a climate of security and stability despite the crisis.¹⁶

Important care measures such as the adoption of screening instruments specifically on the psychological impacts of COVID-19 were not mentioned in the studies.¹⁵

It is pertinent to understand mourning as something that incorporates human exist-

tence and that it is from the resignifications of pain that professionals can emotionally improve their lives. The need to develop resources to help professionals during the bereavement experience is highlighted, which will certainly have profound marks on the people who make up the nursing team.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

The presence of few articles contained in the final synthesis demonstrates the existing gap regarding the experience of mourning by nursing professionals, which on the one hand is explained by the contemporary nature of the theme and on the other hand by the understanding still surrounded by

taboos about the need of talking about death, grief and mental health of nurses and nursing technicians.

The studies analyzed here were of a descriptive, reflective or revision character, which points to the need for new research, especially those with experimental and epidemiological designs, capable of generating greater scientific evidence to support actions that help support professionals in facing the mourning problem during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is believed that this study contributed to the knowledge of the subject at the same time that it sheds light on the need to support emotional aspects of nursing professionals. ■

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