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Psychosocial care of nursing professionals in a university hospital in the face of COVID-19

Atención psicosocial de profesionales de enfermería en un hospital universitario frente a COVID -19

Atendimento psicossocial de profissionais de enfermagem em um hospital universitário frente à COVID-19

ABSTRACT

The objective is to characterize psychosocial care provided to nursing professionals working in a university hospital for the management of mental health problems resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. A quantitative, cross-sectional, observational study with a survey questionnaire on the demands of nursing professionals in coping with COVID-19. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients with 5% significance and adjusted in a linear model, using the statistical software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20. The variables Age (10.70%) and Psychosocial Interventions for Anxiety and Stress Management (95.08%) showed significant differences. The sample consisted of 61 nursing professionals, the majority of whom were women (80%) with a mean age of 33 years. It highlights the importance of psychosocial care aimed at nursing professionals for the management of Mental Health disorders, whether during or after the pandemic, seeking interventions to minimize the suffering of these workers.

DESCRIPTORS: Mental Health; Nursing; Pandemics; COVID-19; Distress.

RESUMEN

Se trata de caracterizar las atenciones psicosociales brindada a profesionales de enfermería en un hospital universitario para el manejo de problemas de salud mental derivados de la pandemia de COVID-19. Estudio cuantitativo, observacional transversal, con cuestionario de encuesta sobre demandas a los profesionales de enfermería en el enfrentamiento de la COVID-19. Los datos fueron analizados por medio del uso de coeficientes de correlación de Pearson con un 5% de significancia y ajustado en modelo lineal, utilizando el software estadístico Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20. Presentaron diferencia significativa las variables Edad (10,70%) e Intervenciones Psicosociales para el Manejo de Ansiedad y Estrés (95,08%). La muestra estuvo compuesta por 61 profesionales de enfermería, siendo la mayoría mujeres (80%) con edad media de 33 años. Se resalta la importancia de la atención psicosocial dirigido a los profesionales de enfermería para el manejo de la Salud Mental, sea durante o después de la pandemia, buscando intervenciones para minimizar el sufrimiento de estos trabajadores.

DESCRIPTORES: Anciano; Salud del Anciano; Sistemas de Apoyo Psicosocial; Visita Domiciliaria.

RESUMO

Objetiva-se caracterizar os atendimentos psicossociais prestados a profissionais de enfermagem em um hospital universitário para o manejo de problemas de saúde mental decorrentes da pandemia de COVID-19. Estudo quantitativo, observacional transversal, com questionário de levantamento sobre demandas aos profissionais de enfermagem no enfrentamento da COVID-19. Os dados foram analisados por meio do uso de coeficientes de correlação de Pearson com 5% de significância e ajustado em modelo linear, utilizando o software estatístico Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20. Apresentaram diferença significativa as variáveis Idade ($\pm 10,70\%$) e Intervenções Psicossociais para o Manejo de Ansiedade e Estresse (95,08%). A amostra foi composta por 61 profissionais de enfermagem, sendo a maioria mulheres (80%) com idade média de 33 anos. Ressalta-se a importância do atendimento psicossocial voltado aos profissionais de enfermagem para o manejo nos problemas de Saúde Mental, seja durante ou após a pandemia, buscando intervenções para minimizar o sofrimento destes trabalhadores.

DESCRIPTORES: Saúde Mental; Enfermagem; Pandemias; COVID-19; Estresse Psicológico.

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INTRODUCTION

SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease COVID-19, has a high rate of contagion and a lethality rate of at least 15%, which can cause severe acute respiratory failure, affecting mainly the elderly and those with chronic diseases.¹

In order to reduce the rate of transmissibility and the peak incidence, behavioral changes, both individual and collective, were imposed on the world population, in the occupation of public spaces, in life and health habits, in consumption patterns and in personal and family relationships.² Such measures were intended to prevent the collapse of the health system and reduce the number of deaths, making it possible to flatten the contagion curve of the new Coronavirus.

However, during the quarantine period, due to social isolation, the exacerbation of several psychological problems

was noted, such as: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, among others.¹

In addition to these symptoms, frontline professionals, such as nurses, doctors, physiotherapists are at increased risk of being infected, in addition to living with large-scale deaths, frustration at not being able to save lives, even when all efforts to treat COVID-19 are exhausted.³

The pandemic context requires greater attention to health workers also with regard to aspects that concern their mental health. Reports of increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, loss of quality of sleep, increased use of drugs, psychosomatic symptoms and fear of becoming infected or transmitting the infection to family members have been recurrent.⁴ A global event like this, required efforts in many areas, especially managers in the organi-

zation of health services.⁵

There was a need to ensure an adequate supply of trained professionals, personal protective equipment, equipment and infirmary beds and in the Intensive Care Units. However, public policies, protocols and actions aimed at preventing mental illness and coping strategies also needed attention and implementation by managers, in health institutions. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented itself as a challenge for health workers, especially nursing, in view of actions related to the work process that involves issues, such as: decision making (cognitive aspect), care practice (technical aspects), changes in the work routine (physical overload) and the psychic load that involves situations of fear and anguish related mainly to biosafety.⁶

Bearing in mind how essential it is to take care of the mental health of these professionals working to combat CO-

VID-19, the “UEPG Abraça” Extension Program of the State University, located in the interior of the State of Paraná, which aims to provide psychological care to students, professors and university agents, together with the Multiprofessional Residency Program in Mental Health of the aforementioned Higher Education institution, offered, starting in March 2020, the beginning of the pandemic in Brazil, psychosocial care for nursing professionals working at the University Hospital Regional of Campos Gerais (HURCG). In this context, we have the following research question: What are the mental health problems presented by nursing professionals in times of the COVID-19 pandemic? To answer this question, this study aimed to characterize the psychosocial care provided to nursing professionals in a university hospital for the management of mental health problems resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHOD

Ethical aspects

This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Ponta Grossa, under the CAAE Opinion 3.591.149. The ethical precepts of voluntary and consented participation of each participant were respected, according to Resolution No. 466/2012 of the National Health Council.

Study design, period and location

Quantitative, observational, cross-sectional study conducted with nursing professionals working at the university hospital (HURCG) of reference in coping with COVID-19, located in the State of Paraná, Brazil. Data collection took place between March and July 2020. The hospital is characterized as public and teaching, with 172 beds, with an average hospitalization of 900 patients/month, in 2019.

Population or sample; inclusion and exclusion criteria

Bearing in mind how essential it is to take care of the mental health of these professionals working to combat COVID-19, the “UEPG Abraça” Extension Program of the State University, located in the interior of the State of Paraná, which aims to provide psychological care to students...

The selected sample consisted of nursing professionals interested in receiving psychological care. The inclusion criteria were: participating in psychosocial care, filling out the care assessment form and the free and informed consent form attached to the questionnaire through the Google Forms platform and being an employee of the hospital. Professionals who did not complete or abandoned care or did not meet the study participation criteria were excluded.

Study protocol

A structured questionnaire was developed, containing sociodemographic characteristics and data for assessing the psychosocial care provided. In line with the COVID-19 protocols and updates on prevention and management, data collection was carried out entirely through the Google Forms platform, avoiding the handling and storage of physical forms.

Data analysis and treatment

Initially, the data were analyzed descriptively by means of absolute and relative frequency. The answer to the question “Do you feel tired or physically exhausted?” Was considered as a dependent variable. and as independent variables, gender and age were considered; and assessment of the psychosocial condition after the psychosocial care provided.

For this assessment of the psychosocial condition after the intervention, closed questions were used with the following questions: Do you feel motivated? (A). Do you feel technically prepared to act in your role at HU-UEPG? (B). Do you feel overwhelmed? (Ç). Do you feel scared? (D). In general, do you think this intervention is influencing personal and social well-being? (E). In general, do you think this intervention is influencing patient care? (F). In general, do you think this intervention is influencing the interpersonal relationship? (G). In general, do you think this intervention is influencing the organization of time to perform my tasks? (H).

To test the association between the dependent variable “Tiredness” and the

independent variables, a bivariate analysis was initially performed using the chi-square test. The variables that presented p value ≤ 0.05 in the analysis were classified as significant difference. The data were analyzed using the statistical software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20 (SPSS®).

RESULTS

The Extension Program together with the Multiprofessional Residency Program in Mental Health attended 61 nursing professionals, of these 29 nurses, 21 nursing technicians and 11 nursing residents who agreed to participate in the research, thus constituting the total sample.

The main data obtained are shown in the table below (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

Regarding sociodemographic indicators, there was a predominance of females, corroborating with the literature and the reality in the health area, mainly in nursing.⁷ Likewise, the average age (= 33) of the professionals attended is in accordance with the sociodemographic profile assessed in the national territory, which indicates a predominance of people under 40 in the nursing professions.⁷

The literature indicates that, throughout the pandemic in Brazil, there was a higher prevalence of complaints of symptoms related to stress, depression and anxiety, among young people, women and people with a previous diagnosis of depression.³ These descriptive data are not able to identify which socio-cultural factors contribute to the worsening of these symptoms, especially among Bra-

zilian women and young people, making it difficult to plan effective protection interventions. However, it is evident that nursing professionals are largely inserted in this population segment for psychosocial risk, demanding attention from the mental health support services throughout the pandemic.

It was highlighted that, in the evaluated period, there was a predominance of professionals who did not describe themselves in professional burnout (59,02%). Some hypotheses that can be associated with this answer are: that professionals in a situation of exhaustion are less inclined to seek the support service in Mental Health; that the workers served were linked to sectors with less impact throughout the pandemic; whereas, at the time of the evaluation, the disease progression in the region did not lead to overload of the service; and that nursing professionals do

Tabela 1- COVID-19: Percepção dos profissionais de enfermagem do hospital universitário.

Variáveis		Sim N (%)	Não N (%)	Total n (%)	p valor
Esgotamento Profissional (cansaço)		25 (40,98)	36 (59,02)	61 (100)	
Sexo	Feminino	22 (80,00)	27 (75,00)	49 (80,33)	0,209
	Masculino	3 (20,00)	9 (25,00)	12 (19,67)	
Idade	Média (SD)	33 ($\pm 10,08$)	38 ($\pm 10,77$)	33 ($\pm 10,70$)	0,127
Motivado (A)	Sim	18 (72,00)	29 (80,56)	49 (80,33)	0,435
	Não	7 (28,00)	7 (19,44)	12 (19,67)	
Tecnicamente Preparado (B)	Sim	17 (68,00)	30 (83,33)	47 (77,05)	0,161
	Não	8 (32,00)	6 (16,67)	14 (22,95)	
Sobrecarreg do (C)	Sim	12 (48,00)	4 (12,50)	16 (26,23)	0,001*
	Não	13 (52,00)	32 (87,50)	45 (73,77)	
Assustado (D)	Sim	18 (72,00)	14 (38,89)	32 (52,46)	0,011*
	Não	7 (28,00)	22 (61,11)	29 (47,54)	
Influencia no Bem-Estar Social (E)	Sim	25 (100,00)	32 (88,89)	57 (93,44)	0,085
	Não	0 (0,00)	4 (11,11)	4 (6,56)	
Influencia no Atendimento ao Paciente (F)	Sim	20 (80,00)	33 (91,67)	53 (86,89)	0,184
	Não	5 (20,00)	3 (8,33)	8 (13,11)	
Influencia no Relacionamento Interpessoal (G)	Sim	23 (92,00)	33 (91,67)	56 (91,80)	0,963
	Não	2 (8,00)	3 (8,33)	5 (8,20)	
Influencia no Tempo para Execução de Tarefas (H)	Sim	19 (76,00)	31 (86,11)	50 (81,97)	11 (18,03)
	Não	0,312	6 (24,00)	5 (13,89)	

Fonte: Os autores, 2020.

Obs: Alfabets de A ao J são referentes às perguntas descritas no método. Valores de p*, onde apresentaram diferença significativa.

not usually admit their limitations in relation to the performance of their work.

As for the indicators assessed by the Mental Health questionnaire, only "Overworked" and "Frightened" obtained statistically significant results for correlation analysis with "Tiredness" considering $p \leq 0,05$ ($p = 0,001$ and $p = 0,011$, respectively). This means that more tired professionals feel more overwhelmed and scared, and conversely, less tired professionals feel less overwhelmed and scared.

These feelings can occur in the face of several emergency situations experienced daily and the emergence of new challenges, resulting from ignorance, constant updates of institutional rules or the inexperience of professionals about the procedures to be adopted in facing the pandemic.^{2,3,8}

In addition, there is a daily risk of contamination, associated with often poor working conditions; as well as the scenario of suffering and constant death of patients and the anguish of their families. The risk of contamination due to the lack of personal protective equipment and the anxiety caused by the use of this equipment, in addition to that experienced at the time of unemployment, can also cause intense suffering in these professionals, even leading to the removal from work, which compromi-

ses, even more, the quality of the service provided to the population.^{2,3,8}

CONCLUSION

The impacts on the population's mental health, imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the incidence of symptoms such as stress, anguish, fear, anxiety, sadness, among others, in this study, were also identified in the results of the characterization of psychosocial care provided to nursing professionals working on the front line to COVID-19 at the University Hospital (HURCG).

The results indicated that, for the most part, the population profile analyzed was composed of women, with an average of 33 years of age, who did not consider themselves to be physically exhausted and tired. The complaint of tiredness was positively correlated with feeling scared or overwhelmed. It is questioned which factors may have an influence on the fatigue report of nursing professionals.

To answer this question, subsequent quantitative analyzes can be developed, also considering aspects related to the employment relationship, shift, the sector of the nursing professionals and their family organization; as well as qualitative research to identify factors associated with this distribution. ■

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