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# Challenges of permanent education in primary health care: an integrative review

**Desafíos de la educación permanente en la atención primaria de salud: una revisión integrativa****Desafios da educação permanente na atenção primária à saúde: uma revisão integrativa****ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** To analyze, in scientific publications, the challenges faced in the process of implementing permanent education practices in primary health care. **Method:** This is an integrative literature review carried out based on the selection of articles published in the LILACS and SciELO databases and between the years 2010 to 2020. **Results:** 450 articles were found and after the application of the inclusion criteria and exclusion, 10 articles were selected for analysis. The results made it possible to show that permanent health education actions in primary care are equivalent to continuing education. Among the existing challenges in carrying out the permanent education are the work overload, turnover, low adherence and lack of characterization of the guidelines by the managers. **Conclusion:** The importance of permanent health education as a movement of significant learning, of approaching teaching-service and qualification of practices within the scope of public health services is emphasized.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Permanent Health Education; Primary Health Care; Human Resources in Health.

**RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** Analizar, en publicaciones científicas, los desafíos enfrentados en el proceso de implementación de prácticas de educación permanente en la atención primaria de salud. **Método:** Se trata de una revisión bibliográfica integradora basada en la selección de artículos publicados en las bases de datos LILACS y SciELO y entre los años 2010 a 2020. **Resultados:** Se encontraron 450 artículos y luego de la aplicación de los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se seleccionaron 10 artículos para analizar. Los resultados permitieron mostrar que las acciones de la educación permanente en salud en atención primaria equivalen a la educación continua. Entre los retos existentes en la realización del educación permanente se encuentran la sobrecarga de trabajo, la rotación, la baja adherencia y la falta de caracterización de las directrices por parte de los directivos. **Conclusión:** Se enfatiza la importancia de la educación permanente en salud como movimiento de aprendizaje significativo, de acercamiento docente-servicio y calificación de prácticas en el ámbito de los servicios de salud pública.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Educación Permanente en Salud; Atención Primaria de Salud; Recursos Humanos en Salud.

**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** Analisar, nas publicações científicas, os desafios enfrentados no processo de implementação das práticas de educação permanente na atenção primária à saúde. **Método:** Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa da literatura realizado a partir da seleção de artigos publicados nas bases de dados LILACS e SciELO e entre os anos de 2010 a 2020. **Resultados:** Foram encontrados 450 artigos. Após a aplicação dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão, foram selecionados 10 artigos para análise. Os resultados possibilitaram evidenciar que as ações de Educação Permanente em Saúde (EPS) na atenção primária são equivalentes à educação continuada. Entre os desafios existentes na efetivação da educação permanente destacam-se a sobrecarga de trabalho, rotatividade, baixa adesão e descaracterização das diretrizes pelos gestores. **Conclusão:** Ressalta-se a importância da Educação Permanente em Saúde como movimento de aprendizagem significativa, de aproximação do ensino-serviço e qualificação das práticas no âmbito dos serviços públicos de saúde.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Educação Permanente em Saúde; Atenção Primária a Saúde; Recursos Humanos em Saúde.

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ORCID: 0000-0001-7604-9132**INTRODUCTION**

The Unified Health System (SUS) coordinates and integrates health actions in the three spheres of government, in order to qualitatively and resolutely meet the demands of the population's health care.<sup>1</sup> The SUS human resources area started to receive special attention in order to meet the needs of the population. This area represents one of the greatest challenges to management, due to the difficulties in implementing work strategies.<sup>2</sup>

Permanent health education (EPS - Educação permanente em saúde) must be understood as a teaching-learning process for health professionals that contributes to their academic training. In addition, it provides the continuous development of workers, enhancing the health actions instituted in public policies, in the qualification of management, in the care for users and the consequent consolidation of SUS.<sup>3</sup>

Experiences in primary care in Brazil have shown positive results regarding the application of EPS, especially in the restructuring of services and in the reconfiguration of processes.<sup>3</sup> However, these initiatives are incipient when compared to the proposals implemented in other countries. The predominant educational actions in the SUS are insufficient to meet the growing demands, specifically in primary care, due to the lack of articulation with the regionalities and the predominant practices in each health care service.<sup>4</sup>

The proximity of the services and the understanding of their operation makes it possible to identify the challenges of daily work in order to implement effective permanent education programs. Still, the study is justified by the need to highlight the adversities existing in the scenario of training and professional development in primary care, looking in the literature for political-methodological alternatives that strengthen this process. In addition to contributing to the construction of educational proposals that collaborate with the improvement of SUS care and management.

Thus, the objective of the present study is to analyze, in scientific publications, the challenges faced in the process of implementing permanent education practices in primary health care.

**METHOD**

The research was based on the precepts

of the integrative review according to the steps proposed by Souza; Silva and Carvalho<sup>5</sup>: definition of the theme and elaboration of the research question; establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria; sample selection; organization and tabulation of data; evaluation of the content of the included studies; discussion of results; final presentation of the integrative review.

In view of this, the guiding question was formulated: what are the main challenges described in the literature for the implementation of permanent education in primary care?

Thus, a search was made in the databases of Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS), and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), from the DeCS health terminology, through the crossing of descriptors, in Portuguese and English: Permanent health education and Primary Health Care with the Boolean operator AND (Table 1).

Table 1- Selection of articles from the databases, crossing of descriptors and articles found. Aracaju/SE (2020)

DATA BASE	CROSSING OF DESCRIPTORS	ARTICLES FOUND		
		TITLE	SUMMARY	FULL
LILACS	Educação permanente em saúde AND Atenção primária à saúde	377	56	28
SCIELO	Educação permanente em saúde AND Atenção primária à saúde	73	29	6
TOTAL SELECTED =			10	

Source: Research data.

Data collection was carried out in January 2020 and followed the following inclusion criteria: original articles in Portuguese and English, available in full and free of charge, published between 2010 and 2020. Bibliographic review articles, theses, dissertations, editorials and reflective studies.

Due to the characteristics of each database, data collection was carried out in two

stages. The first consisted of a survey of the number of articles by title, which showed: 377 in LILACS and 73 SciELO, totaling 450 publications. Then, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, reading the abstracts or abstract were applied, selecting 34 articles, 28 in LILACS and 6 in SciELO.

In the second stage of selection, the full reading was carried out, 24 of which were

excluded because they were duplicates or had no direct relationship with the theme under analysis. The sample consisted of 10 articles that were re-read and extracted from the following information: title, authors, year, objectives, method and main results.

## RESULTS

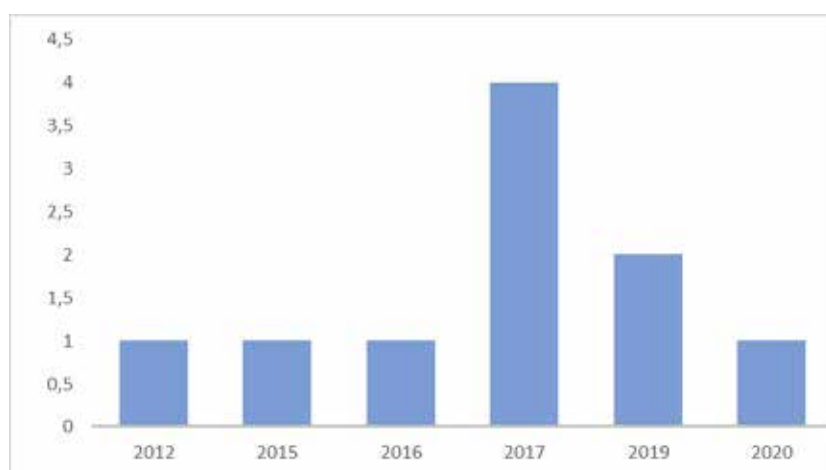
Regarding the year of publication, there was a predominance of the years 2017 with 4 (40%) articles, followed by 2019 with 2 (20%). In the other years, the number of publications was equal to 2012 (10%), 2015 (10%), 2016 (10%) and 2020 (10%). There were no publications related to the subject under analysis in the years 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2018 (Graph 1).

Table 2 presents the identification of studies according to title, authors, year of publication, objectives, method and journals.

## DISCUSSION

When analyzing the studies, it is possible to identify the concern of profes-

Graph 1- Distribution of articles, according to year of publication (2010-2020)



Source: Data research.

Table 2- Distribution of studies, according to title, author/year, objectives, method and journals

Nº	TITLE	AUTHOR/YEAR	OBJECTIVES	METHOD	JOURNAL
1	Challenges in the construction of a permanent health education project <sup>6</sup>	SILVA et al., 2012	To know the challenges encountered in the construction of an EPS proposal in a hospital institution	Descriptive Exploratory Qualitative	Revista de Enfermagem da UFSM
2	Perspective of managers in a region of the state of São Paulo on permanent health education <sup>7</sup>	MISHIMA et al., 2015	Analyze the concepts of Permanent Education in Health - EPS, operated by municipal managers and translated into official documents.	Qualitative	Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP
3	Permanent education in the nursing work process <sup>3</sup>	SILVA et al., 2016	To highlight the incidence of permanent health education in the nursing work process.	Descriptive Exploratory Qualitative	Revista de Enfermagem do Centro-Oeste Mineiro
4	Permanent education in the daily lives of family health teams: utopia, intention or reality? <sup>8</sup>	BOMFIM et al., 2017	Discuss the senses and meanings of Permanent Health Education in the work of the Family Health teams in Senhor do Bonfim-BA and their theory-practical articulation.	Qualitative	Revista de pesquisa cuidado é fundamental
5	Permanent education and professional qualification for primary care <sup>9</sup>	MOREIRA et al., 2017	Analyze the evaluation of family health teams regarding the items of permanent education and professional qualification for Primary Care.	Transversal Analytical Quantitative	Saúde e pesquisa

6	Permanent education in health services: educational activities developed in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil <sup>10</sup>	SENA et al., 2017	To analyze educational activities developed in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, considered as Permanent Education in Health.	Qualitative and quantitative	Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem
7	Permanent health education in primary care: perception of municipal health managers <sup>11</sup>	SILVA et al., 2017	Know the health education strategies recommended and developed for primary care workers by managers.	Descriptive Exploratory Qualitative	Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem
8	Planning and development of Permanent Education in Health actions from the perspective of PMAQ-AB <sup>1</sup>	ALMEIDA et al., 2019	To analyze how the development of Permanent Education (EP) actions takes place based on the planning and evaluation documents of the actions of the National Program for Improving Access and Quality in Primary Care (PMAQ-AB).	Exploratory Documentary Qualitative	Saúde em Debate
9	Permanent health education: rethinking the construction of health practices <sup>12</sup>	ROJAS et al., 2019	Discuss the National Policy for Permanent Education in Health and its potential influence on health professionals.	Case study Qualitative	Journal Health NPEPS
10	Permanent health education (EPS) in the work process of family health teams (FHS) <sup>13</sup>	DOLNY et al., 2020	Analyze the implementation of EPS in the work of Family Health teams (FHS), the types of support accessed and the factors that favor or hinder this practice.	Qualitative Quantitative	Brazilian Journal of Health Review

Source: Research data.

sionals in providing quality care and, for this reason, they conceive permanent health education as a necessary tool for daily work practices in primary care.

However, EPS constitutes a paradigm in health in general, as its practices are aligned with the traditional concept of health education and continuing education. This is because many undergraduate courses have a mistaken concept of EPS, which perpetuates punctual, programmatic, centralized training actions, with a focus on updating knowledge directed to a category, which is evidenced by fragmented programs and a management unable to meet the demands of professionals.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this, the EPS is a pedagogical intervention proposal, based on education that allows the creation of collective spaces for reflection, construction and evaluation of projects, actions and results produced by the work team. It is also possible to transform the relationships in the work processes, in the adopted behaviors, in the attitudes be-

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tween professionals and between them and the users of primary care.<sup>8</sup>

It is understood, therefore, that PHE in primary care requires a transformation, starting from the conception of workers about their practices, critical reflection of the conducts, as well as suggesting proposals related to the problematization of the daily work (and health training) and, from there, transform services by reorganizing and reframing the work process.<sup>11</sup>

The analyzed studies revealed that inadequacies in daily work represent a barrier to the realization of EPS, such as overload of work, caused by the reduced number of professionals, lack of planning to carry out EPS proposals, devaluation of EPS by managers or mischaracterization of its guidelines, due to the lack of knowledge, proving to be intervening factors for the qualification of workers.<sup>3,6,13</sup>

Still, it was pointed out that the fragmentation of the work process, the turnover of professionals, the disarticula-

tion between the levels of assistance, the lack of interest of workers and the lack of definition of training and professional development policies for EPS may be associated with politicians interests.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, it is necessary to sensitize managers and health professionals about permanent education, with an integrated participation of all in the establishment of an education policy at work that favors the replication of knowledge and the continuity of health actions, regardless of professional experience.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

It was found that permanent education actions have been developed with the logic of continuing education, through the application of isolated, fragmented and decontextualized actions from

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day to day work. Barriers to effecting EPS are related to work overload, lack of planning, devaluation of EPS by managers or mischaracterization of their guidelines, worker turnover in units, low adherence, and coping strategies that minimize these challenges are necessary.

Through the EPS programs, the role of the professional is sought in promoting a reflection of their conduct and problematizing the needs of the unit and the users in order to seek, together with the managers, solutions that qualify the health services. Thus, it is understood that the practices of permanent education in the scope of primary care must be dynamic and flexible, in addition to following the guidelines of SUS, which transpose the approach of this review, requiring further research to explore successful experiences of professional qualification in the field of health. ■

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