Reflections on assistance to pregnant women in COVID-19 pandemic: focus on mental health

Reflexiones sobre la asistencia a las mujeres embarazadas en la pandemia de COVID-19: enfoque en la salud mental

Reflexões sobre assistência as gestantes na pandemia por COVID-19: enfoque na saúde mental

ABSTRACT
The aim is to consider the role of health professionals about COVID-19 pandemic impacts on pregnants' mental health. Methods: relate to a reflexive theoretical trial, well-supported on the available literature in the National Library of Medicine e Scientific Eletronic Library Online database, utilizing the descriptors "coronavirus infections", AND "prenatal care", AND "nursing". Results: apprehending the challenges for health professionals under surveillance to the pregnants, about COVID preventions care and your clinical implications in the pregnancy, and the impacts of this pandemic on mental disorders of these women where mental suffering, like anxiety and depression, that may cause repercussions in the mother-child binomial. Conclusion: be detached the importance of professional performance thought the qualified listening, offer to the pregnants express their pregnancies worries in the middle of a pandemic, demystifying myths, fake news and clarifying theirs concerns with doable guidances.
DESCRIPTORS: Coronavirus Infections; Prenatal Care; Mental Health; Nursing.

RESUMEN
Objetivo: Reflejar el rol de los profesionales de la salud en el impacto de la pandemia COVID-19 en la salud mental de las embarazadas. Método: Este es un ensayo teórico reflexivo, basado en la literatura disponible en las bases de datos en línea de la Biblioteca Nacional de Medicina y la Biblioteca Electrónica Científica, utilizando las palabras clave "infecciones por coronavirus" AND "atención prenatal" AND "enfermería". Resultados: aprehendemos los desafíos para los profesionales de la salud en el acompañamiento de las gestantes, en relación con la atención para la prevención del COVID-19 y sus implicaciones clínicas en el embarazo, y los impactos de esta pandemia en la salud mental de estas mujeres, en los que Padecer trastornos mentales, como ansiedad y depresión, puede tener repercusiones en la madre y el niño. Conclusión: se destaca la importancia del desempeño del profesional a través de la escucha calificada, brindando a las embarazadas a expresar sus inquietudes sobre el embarazo en medio de una pandemia, desmitificando mitos, noticias falsas y aclarando dudas con pautas factibles.
DESCRIPTORES: Infecciones por Coronavirus; Atención Prenatal; Salud Mental.

RESUMO
Objetivo: Refletir o papel dos profissionais da saúde sobre o impacto da pandemia por COVID-19 na saúde mental das gestantes. Método: Trata-se de um ensaio teórico reflexivo, embasado na literatura disponível nas bases de dados National Library of Medicine e Scientific Eletronic Library Online, utilizando os descritores "coronavírus infections" AND "prenatal care" AND "nursing". Resultados: Apreende-se os desafios para os profissionais de saúde no acompanhamento às gestantes, em relação aos cuidados para a prevenção da COVID-19 e suas implicações clínicas na gestação, e, aos impactos dessa pandemia na saúde mental dessas mulheres, em que sofrimentos mentais, como ansiedade e depressão, podem vir a causar repercussões ao binômio mãe e filho. Conclusão: destaca-se a importância da atuação do profissional por meio de escuta qualificada, proporcionar às gestante expressarem suas preocupações pela gestação em meio a uma pandemia, desmistificando mitos, notícias falsas e esclarecendo as dúvidas com orientações factíveis.
DESCRITORES: Infecções por Coronavírus; Cuidado Pré-natal; Saúde Mental; Enfermagem.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11th, 2020, imposed changes in the routine of all types of health services and considering the high risk of morbidity and mortality and also the fact that some people have shown to be more vulnerable to this new disease, some groups were classified as at risk for developing the severe form of COVID-19, including pregnant women. [1]

The inclusion of pregnant women in the risk group took into account the knowledge regarding other pathogenic coronaviruses and other viral infections, such as SARS COV-1 and H1N1, which could then predict pregnancy complications. [2] During pregnancy, several maternal immunological and physiological changes occur, which cause changes in cellular immunity, as well as in pulmonary function, making this population more susceptible to infections, as well as to the development of obstetric complications and adverse perinatal outcomes in cases of viral respiratory diseases. [3]

According to the Brazilian Obstetric Observatory COVID-19 (OOBr COVID-19), the country recorded, since the beginning of the pandemic until May 5th, 2021, 11,247 cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SRAG) caused by COVID-19 in pregnant and postpartum women, representing 1% of all cases (OOBr COVID-19). Deaths accounted for 1.031, with an increase of 233,8% in the weekly average of 2021 when compared to 2020, higher than the general population, where the increase was 97%. [4]

Evidence shows that the probability of complications in pregnant women is the same as in the non-pregnant population. In view of this, we must pay attention to pregnant women who have Systemic Arterial Hypertension (SAH), Diabetes Mellitus (DM) and chronic pulmonary pathologies (asthma, COPD, among others), due to their higher rates of complications. [5]

Available data so far reveal the possibility of premature rupture of membranes, preterm birth, high number of cesarean sections, fetal tachycardia, fetal distress and even fetal death in women who had CO-VID-19 during pregnancy. [2]

The literature also emphasizes that pregnant women with COVID-19 who develop the severe form of the disease are more likely to undergo emergency cesarean delivery, even premature birth, thus increasing the risk of maternal and neonatal death. [1] In this context, the importance of giving greater attention to this group of women is highlighted in order to reduce risks and injuries, as well as to identify maternal involvement and risks related to vertical transmissions. [6]

Considering all this information and scientific uncertainties about this new disease, many pregnant women have expressed their fears of possible problems during pregnancy and at the time of delivery that can occur if they are with COVID-19, feelings that are totally understandable regarding the situation faced. [1]

It is also noteworthy that, as pregnancy is a time of transition in the individual and family life cycle and intrapsychic, family, social, socioeconomic and professional role reorganizations, it can lead pregnant women to become especially sensitive and emotionally vulnerable. [7]

In this dimension, the need for these women to continue enjoying quality prenatal care is highlighted, where not only trivial monitoring of pregnancy should be offered, but also emotional support aimed at their fears in relation to the pandemic they are facing, as well as with the development of health education actions in order to detect and intervene early in situations that pose a risk to the mother and child, since the development of mental disorders such as anxiety and depression have a serious impact on the lives of these women, of their children and family. [8]

However, as any dimension related to the new coronavirus needs further investigation, it is proposed to reflect the role of health professionals on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of pregnant women.

METHOD

This is a reflective theoretical study, derived from studies and debates carried out among the authors, during the Work Process in Health and Nursing discipline of the Postgraduate Program in Nursing, from March to June 2021 and based on available literature on the subject, without time frame, in the National Library of Medicine (PUBMED) and Scientific Electronic Library Online

(SciELO) databases using the descriptors "coronavirus infections"; "prenatal care"; "nursing" in a conjugated form using the Boolean AND operator. As inclusion criteria, studies available in English, Portuguese and Spanish that address the mental health of pregnant women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were adopted, and the exclusion criteria were: secondary studies that did not address the research topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It presents a reflection on the role of health professionals on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of pregnant women.

Some studies show that being part of the risk group for developing the severe form of COVID-19 has been considered an enhancer for the occurrence of mental disorders, where the risk was 1,6 times higher in this population. [9]

Thus, regardless of whether you have COVID-19 or not, health professionals should take a closer look at them, considering the emotional lability inherent in the experience of pregnancy, enhanced by the current pandemic situation, in order to strengthen communication and offer emotional and psychological support. [10]

In this context, health professionals, especially those in nursing, need to rethink their actions with these women, with a focus on alleviating and even preventing impacts of the disease for the mother-child binomial.

Persistent anxiety, stress and depression throughout pregnancy are associated with negative obstetric outcomes, such as preterm birth, low birth weight, in addition to harmful effects on the neurological development of the fetus, and in the long term it can affect the child in relation to the attention regulation, cognitive and motor development, temperament and emotional regulation in their first years of life. Depression during pregnancy is considered a risk factor for the development of postpartum depression, which can affect the mother-infant relationship and the child's psychosocial development. [7]

The authors also emphasize that depression during pregnancy is considered a risk factor for the development of postpartum depression, which can have effects on the mother-infant relationship and on the child's psychosocial development. [7]

Thus, in order to help reduce the impacts of the pandemic on the mental health of these women, it is necessary that health professionals are aware of the signs and symptoms of the onset of possible disorders, such as insomnia, anxiety, loss of appetite, difficulty of concentration and even a panic attack, with the aim of intervening early, minimizing future repercussions. [11]

For the development of actions with this group, the use of light technologies is highlighted, with the fundamental use of qualified listening, which is among the attributions of the nursing professional in the most diverse levels of health care.

It is worth remembering that care technologies are divided into three dimensions, light technologies that encompass actions of communication, embracement, bonding and listening, hard light technologies that comprise epidemiology, clinic, in addition to other structured knowledge and finally hard technologies which are the equipment and machines used to develop health care. [12]

The nurse must think about the nursing process with a biopsychosocial perspective, with the objective of fully meeting that individual, thus meeting their real needs. Through qualified listening, the professional can identify the biopsychosocial factors that can trigger depressive symptoms. [13]

From this perspective, the role of the nurse is highlighted both in Primary Health Care (PHC) and in hospital care, however it is worth remembering that it is in the PHC that a recommended space for prenatal care is offered. [1] Thus, professionals working in these health units have more opportunities to develop actions with pregnant women as a way to prevent, as well as to identify cases of depression and anxiety early.

During their work, nursing professionals, in addition to the usual actions with pregnant women, must now include guidelines, as well as demystifying information regarding COVID-19. This is due to the fact that with the evolution of communication and ease of access, as well as the dissemination, creation and sharing of information made possible by social media, new implications for the global reality emerged, such as the large number of Fake News. [1]

These false messages have been spread in various formats, usually they are texts with an affirmative character, which leads people, especially those who are not used to checking the information, to not only believe but also share the fake news. [14]

More specifically regarding the new coronavirus, Fake News has spread at a great rate, perhaps as fast as the rate at which the new virus has spread. Therefore, monitoring this false information as well as responding to them quickly has become a major challenge, and has represented a serious risk to public health. Thus, preventing the proliferation of this type of news is a way to minimize the impacts that erroneous information can cause, in addition to preventing chaos from ensuing. [15]

Another challenge that has been faced by health professionals in meeting the demands of pregnant women is the constant changes in the health network, such as scheduling appointments, requiring the development of new strategies to meet the demands of pregnant women.

Among the new strategies that studies have brought are telehealth, drive through, home care when necessary, screening considering the level of risk of each patient, in addition to, of course, greater attention to pregnant women, as well as caregivers and newborns in relation to the presence of respiratory symptoms and fever. [16-17-18]

According to the Brazilian Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics Associations (FEBRASGO - Federação Brasileira das Associações de Ginecologia e Obstetrícia), when consultations are necessary, it is recommended to increase the time between appointments, in order to avoid crowding in the waiting room. Make devices with alcohol gel available throughout the health unit, in addition to keeping the environments ventilated. Eliminate or even restrict objects shared by

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patients and staff, such as pens, telephones, magazines, among others. [19]

Finally, the literature emphasizes that knowing the new implemented strategies and existing recommendations contributes to reducing patients' anxiety. [18]

Given the above, it is clear that, for health professionals, several challenges have arisen in relation to the monitoring of pregnant women, however we emphasize that they should not only pay attention to the care for the prevention of COVID-19 and its clinical repercussions on a pregnant woman , but also the impacts of this pandemic on the mental health of these women, requiring these professionals to take a closer look at this issue, especially when considering the short, medium and long-term impacts that mental disorders such as anxiety and depression can cause on the mother and son binomial.

CONCLUSION

This study came with the proposal to bring reflections on the care of pregnant women at this time of pandemic, reinforcing the importance that health professionals have a broader look at these women, not only focusing on issues related to COVID-19, but also on the identification of possible mental suffering, due to their physiological vulnerabilities and also to the biopsychosocial impact that this entire situation faced has caused in people's lives.

In this context, the role of the health professional stands out, through qualified listening, with a focus on light technologies, which allow pregnant women to express their concerns regarding the new life scenario brought by pregnancy in the midst of a pandemic of unknown severity for the majority of the population, demystifying myths, fake news and clarifying doubts with practical guidelines. ■

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