

Health education: contributions of nursing professionals prevention, screening and control of HTLV

Educação em saúde: contribuições dos profissionais de enfermagem sobre prevenção, triagem e controle do HTLV

Educación sanitaria: aportaciones de los profesionales de enfermería sobre prevención, el cribado y el control del HTLV

RESUMO

Objetivo: Descrever as contribuições de enfermagem sobre a prevenção, triagem e controle do vírus linfotrópico de células T humana-HTLV. **Método:** Trata-se de uma pesquisa de carácter qualitativa com abordagem exploratória e descritiva, através de pesquisa de campo realizado em todas as UBS – Unidades Básicas de Saúde do município de Augustinópolis. **Resultado:** Observou que 66,8% não conhece as formas de prevenção para o vírus, 89,1% não trabalha ação sobre vírus linfotrópico de células T humanas nas UBS, 77,8% respondeu que não existe programa atualmente desenvolvido pelo Ministério da Saúde que realiza triagem do vírus e 88,9% não souberam responder quais seriam as orientações para as portadoras do vírus grávidas. **Conclusão:** Os enfermeiros atuantes no município de Augustinópolis não trabalharam ações sobre o vírus nas Unidades básicas de saúde, no entanto a pesquisa colabora para o aumento da literatura científica sobre o assunto para contribuir na inserção da temática entre os profissionais de enfermagem do município.

DESCRIPTORES: Educação em saúde; HTLV; Enfermagem.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To describe the nursing contributions on the prevention, screening and control of human T-cell lymphotropic virus-HTLV. **Method:-** This is a qualitative research with exploratory and descriptive approach, through field research conducted in all UBS - Unidades Básicas de Saúde (Basic Health Units) of the municipality of Augustinópolis. **Results:** It was observed that 66.8% did not know the forms of prevention for the virus, 89.1% did not work on the human T-cell lymphotropic virus in the UBS, 77.8% answered that there is no program currently developed by the Ministry of Health that performs screening for the virus and 88.9% could not answer what would be the guidelines for pregnant carriers of the virus. **Conclusion:** The nurses working in the municipality of Augustinópolis did not work with actions about the virus in basic health units, however, the research contributes to the increase of scientific literature on the subject to contribute to the insertion of the theme among nursing professionals in the municipality.

DESCRIPTORS: Health education; HTLV; Nursing.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Describa las contribuciones de la enfermería sobre la prevención, el tratamiento y el control del virus linfotrópico de células T humano-HTLV. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa con enfoque exploratorio y descriptivo, a través de una investigación de campo realizada en todas las UBS - Unidades Básicas de Salud del municipio de Augustinópolis. Se observó que el 66,8% no conocía las formas de prevención para el virus, el 89,1% no trabajaba la acción sobre el virus linfotrópico de células T humanas en la UBS, el 77,8% respondió que no hay ningún programa actualmente desarrollado por el Ministerio de Salud que realice el cribado del virus y el 88,9% no pudo responder cuáles serían las directrices para las embarazadas portadoras del virus. Las enfermeras que trabajan en el municipio de Augustinópolis no trabajaron acciones sobre el virus en las unidades básicas de salud, sin embargo, la investigación contribuye al aumento de la literatura científica sobre el tema para contribuir a la inserción del tema entre los profesionales de enfermería del municipio.

DESCRIPTORES: Educación sanitaria; HTLV; Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

The human T-cell lymphotropic virus - HTLV, classified as the first retrovirus in the 1980s, still has its characteristics unknown to many because it is a virus with pathogenic potential, currently classified into 4 subtypes, with the HTLV-1 subtype causing the most comorbidities.¹⁰

In this aspect, many of those infected do not present clinical manifestations, but HTLV-1 infection is associated with the

development of pathologies, especially adult T-cell leukemia (ATL), as it treats a type of blood cancer and neurological diseases such as tropical spastic paraparesis (TSP), also called HTLV-associated myelopathy (HAM), now known as HAM/TSP.¹³ Therefore, because it is a Sexually Transmitted Infection - STI, HTLV is transmitted both vertically, through breastfeeding, and horizontally, sexually and parenterally by blood transfusion.¹¹

In this sense, one of the biggest challen-

ges is to avoid the transmission of HTLV from mother to child, so breastfeeding is not recommended in the case of seropositivity of the mother, although testing for the virus is not mandatory, Rede Cegonha makes it a complementary test during prenatal care.²

Thus, it is estimated that around 20 million people worldwide are infected with the HTLV virus, of these, 2.5 million are in Brazil, with the North and Northeast regions having the highest number of ca-

ses, and because of this, HTLV in Brazil is considered a public health problem, since it does not have specific public policies for the disease, the result is late diagnosis, poor monitoring of the infected and ignorance of the population and health professionals themselves about the virus and the pathologies caused.^{10,14,11}

Therefore, nursing professionals who work in primary health care are closely linked to the process of promotion, prevention and control of infections, since the familiarity and knowledge of these professionals about the HTLV pathology is essential. It is important to emphasize that this professional must be prepared to inform carriers about the virus, its associated diseases and the progression of these pathologies, in addition to being proactive in testing the virus, since there are no public policies that determine the obligation in the normal work routine or in prenatal care, unlike other infections such as HIV, syphilis and viral hepatitis.⁵

In this aspect, the present study aims to describe the contributions of nursing professionals on the prevention, screening and control of HTLV and associated diseases, in the city studied, since the research contributed to increase the literature on the subject.

METHODS

This is a qualitative study with an exploratory and descriptive approach. Thus, qualitative research allows the researcher to approach the object of study, providing details in relation to the characteristics presented.⁶ Thus, descriptive and exploratory research has the main purpose of developing, clarifying and modifying concepts and ideas, with a view to formulating more precise problems or researchable hypotheses for further studies. These are developed with the objective of providing an overview, of the approximate type, about a certain fact, and in addition, this type of study provides greater familiarity with the problem, with a view to making it more explicit, which may involve a bibliographic survey and interviews with people experienced in the

researched problem.⁷

Thus, the research was carried out from March to April 2021 in all UBS - Basic Health Units in the city of Augustinópolis, Tocantins, Brazil, the municipality has 6 basic health units, five in the urban area and one in the rural area. In this aspect, the population studied were nurses working in primary care in the city studied, since the city has 6 basic health units, 6 care professionals and 3 managers were surveyed, the sample was 100% of those involved.

The study included as inclusion criteria: nursing professionals who were working at the time of the research in the basic health units of Augustinópolis - TO and who signed the consent form. Professionals who did not accept the research and who did not sign the informed consent form were excluded from the study.

The interviews were carried out at the UBS, during the time chosen by the study participant, in a reserved room and in special cases applied online through the Google Forms platform. Therefore, for the analysis of the data obtained, a database was developed in the program Microsoft Office Excel® (2010) and Microsoft Office Word® (2010), where they were quantified in absolute numbers and percentages and presented in the form of tables and graphs, and moreover, the information collected by the forms was analyzed qualitatively, in a descriptive way. Therefore, the research in question was carried out with a favorable opinion from the Research Ethics Committee of the State Unit of Tocantins, under the

number CAAE: 34021120.0.0000.8023. We sought to meet the guidelines of resolutions 466/2012 with regard to protecting the dignity and integrity of the human person participating in the research, since data collection was only started after the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) had been evaluated and approved by it.

RESULTS

The study analyzed the research participants' knowledge about HTLV prevention, more than half said they did not know the ways to prevent contagion (66.7%) indicating that these professionals would not be able to carry out health education with their public about the ways to prevent this pathology, and in addition, it was asked if at some point the HTLV theme had already been worked on in the basic units where they work and only 11.1% answered yes, as can be seen in table 1:

Thus, the second topic portrays the contributions of nursing professionals on screening and control of HTLV and associated diseases, since nurses were asked if they were aware of any government program that performs testing for HTLV. 11.1% said that the men's health program performs testing, 11.1% the stork network and 77.8% reported that there is no program that performs testing. Thus, about knowing if the pregnant woman needs any special guidance, 22.2% answered that they do not need it, 22.2% did not know and 55.6% answered that the pregnant wo-

Table 1 - Representation of nurses who already work HTLV in the health unit where they work and know about the forms of prevention in the city of Augustinópolis-TO.

	N	%
Do you know the ways to prevent HTLV?		
Yes	3	33,3
No	6	66,7
At the UBS where you work, have you had any action on HTLV?		
Yes	1	11,1
No	8	98,1

N= absolute frequency;
%= relative frequency.
Source: Research Data, 2021.

man does need special guidance. However, 88.9% were unable to cite any example of guidance for this audience and only 11.1% answered that it would be about not breastfeeding. Therefore, the table below describes the knowledge of nursing professionals about HTLV screening and control:

DISCUSSION

Thus, the research was carried out with 9 nurses who work in primary care in the city of Augustinópolis - TO, since there were 6 assistant nurses and 3 managers. Thus, the results obtained in the study will be subdivided according to the findings of the questionnaire and the following findings will be addressed in this topic: the importance of carrying out educational activities on HTLV prevention in the basic units analyzed and describing the contributions of nursing professionals on the prevention, screening and control of HTLV and associated diseases. The discussion of this study extends to bringing information about the virus.

Professionals are knowledge facilitators and primary care is the main gateway to the unified health system. Thus, the nurse working in primary care plays a role in assisting various pathologies, in addition to having the role of educator, advising on prevention, treatment, humanizing care and paying attention to the continuity and pursuit of the patient's well-being.¹⁶ It is worth mentioning that education and health are essential in the process of sensitizing users, but investments are necessary to implement them.¹⁴

It is observed that the HTLV is not worked in the basic units of the city of Augustinópolis and that the nursing professionals need to know the ways of transmission of the virus, because in the case of an STI, HTLV can be worked with other infections such as HIV and syphilis. In this way, the month of December is the thematic month for the prevention of these infections, being a great opportunity for HTLV to be placed in visibility within the educational actions carried out in basic health units, since the guidelines on prevention are the same for

Table 2 - Knowledge of nursing professionals about HTLV screening and control in the city of Augustinópolis-TO.

	N	%
Is there any program currently developed by the Ministry of Health that performs HTLV testing?		
Saúde do homem	1	11,1
Hiperdia	00	00
Rede cegonha	1	11,1
There isn't	7	77,8
Does the pregnant woman need specific guidance on HTLV?		
Yes	5	55,6
No	2	22,2
I don't know	2	22,2
If you answer "Yes" to the above question, please provide some guidance.		
Yes	1	11,1
No	8	98,1

N= Absolute frequency;
%= Relative frequency.
Fonte: Research Data, 2021.

STIs, including the use of condoms in all sexual relations, not sharing sharps, among others.¹⁷

It is extremely important that professionals know the HTLV and that prenatal testing is also performed. HTLV is screened in Brazilian blood banks and Rede Cegonha uses it as a supplement during prenatal care.²

Thus, one of the biggest concerns about the transmission of HTLV is the transmission from mother to child, as this transmission can happen through the placenta or at the time of delivery, but the greatest example of Maternal-Infant Transmission - MIT is through breastfeeding, this practice being prohibited in cases of seropositive mothers.¹¹ In this aspect, the nurse together with the doctor are the professionals responsible for prenatal care, since in Brazil at least 6 prenatal consultations are recommended, half being the responsibility of the nurse and the other half of the doctor.¹⁶ In this way, in prenatal consultations, the woman is fully monitored, her doubts are removed, vitamins and other medicines are prescribed, vaccination records are updated and exams are requested for diseases that can harm the mother and the baby. STIs are screened at

the first consultation through rapid tests for HIV, syphilis, HB and HC.¹⁶

The most recommended thing is that testing for HTLV takes place during prenatal care, but there is no official regulation for this practice, similar to what already happens in blood banks. It was possible to find in the literature on the subject some state experiences of HTLV testing in pregnant women with the aim of early diagnosis and prevention of mother-to-child transmission. Thus, the studies found that the prevalence of HTIV-1 is relatively high among pregnant women in the cities surveyed.^{4,3} A survey carried out in Salvador, among 116,689 pregnant women, observed a prevalence of 0.13% of HTLV 1/2, and 87% (133) of these were HTLV-1-positive, and in addition, an example that prenatal screening for HTLV is an option capable of reducing infection is described in several studies that demonstrate a process of systematic serological testing among prenatal pregnant women, and puts non-breastfeeding counseling into practice for mothers of HIV-positive mothers.⁴

Therefore, during the process of counseling pregnant women with HTLV, the issue is complex, as the prohibition of bre-

astfeeding in these cases can cause suffering and sadness in the woman, as well as social and family demands. In view of the above, there is a negligence of HTLV in Brazil and the need for nursing professionals to know the pathology in order to assist people with the virus.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it appears that the nursing professionals working in primary care in the city of Augustinópolis - TO know the subject that was addressed in this study. It was possible to identify that actions on HTLV are not worked on in the basic units surveyed. As a suggestion for early diagnosis and reduction of HTLV transmission, especially maternal and child, testing would be performed during prenatal care,

as is done with other STIs. In this sense, the basic unit is the main gateway for patients to health services, nurses working in primary care must be able to score recommendations for counseling people with HTLV.

The research contributes to the increase of the scientific literature on the subject, in addition to contributing to the awareness of health professionals who work in primary care and municipal managers.

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