

# Nursing consultation with oncological patients submitted to radiotherapy: Experience report

Dificuldades do atendimento ginecológico para o homem trans: Uma revisão integrativa

Consulta de enfermería con pacientes oncológicos sometidos a radioterapia: Relato de experiencia

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Descrever a atuação do enfermeiro durante a consulta de enfermagem realizada com pacientes oncológicos submetidos a radioterapia. **Métodos:** Trata-se de relato de experiência da vivência no setor de radioterapia, a partir da realização das consultas de enfermagem a pacientes oncológicos, no período de março a abril de 2022. **Resultados:** O paciente com indicação de realizar radioterapia, é encaminhado para a consulta inicial com a enfermagem, a qual se prolonga durante todo o tratamento da radioterapia. O paciente recebe a Cartilha de Orientações que contém informações necessárias sobre o tratamento, em seguida é realizada a simulação e início do tratamento propriamente dito. **Considerações:** O enfermeiro é o profissional de grande relevância na equipe multiprofissional, que presta assistência durante a radioterapia, exercendo atividades gerenciais, consultas de enfermagem, identificando diagnóstico de enfermagem e efeitos colaterais do tratamento. Utiliza-se das tecnologias em saúde, a fim de proporcionar mais segurança e efetividade no momento do procedimento.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Tecnologia Biomédica; Enfermagem; Radioterapia

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To describe the role of nurses during the nursing consultation performed with cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy. **Methods:** This is an experience report of the experience in the radiotherapy sector, from the realization of nursing consultations with cancer patients, from march to april 2022. **Results:** The patient with an indication for radiotherapy is referred to the initial consultation with the nursing staff, which lasts throughout the radiotherapy treatment. The patient receives the Guidance Booklet that contains necessary information about the treatment, then the simulation and start of treatment itself is performed. **Considerations:** The nurse is the professional of great relevance in the multidisciplinary team, who provides assistance during radiotherapy, performing managerial activities, nursing consultations, identifying nursing diagnoses, and treatment side effects. It uses health technologies in order to provide more safety and effectiveness at the time of the procedure.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Biomedical Technology; Nursing; Radiotherapy

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Describir el papel de los enfermeros durante la consulta de enfermería realizada con pacientes oncológicos sometidos a radioterapia. **Métodos:** Se trata de un relato de experiencia en el sector de la radioterapia, a partir de la realización de consultas de enfermería con pacientes oncológicos, de marzo a abril 2022. **Resultados:** El paciente con indicación de radioterapia es derivado a la consulta inicial con el personal de enfermería, que se prolonga durante todo el tratamiento radioterápico. El paciente recibe el Folleto de Orientación que contiene la información necesaria sobre el tratamiento, luego se realiza la simulación e inicio del tratamiento propriamente dicho. **Consideraciones:** El enfermero es el profesional de gran relevancia en el equipo multidisciplinario, que brinda asistencia durante la radioterapia, realizando actividades gerenciales, consultas de enfermería, identificando diagnósticos de enfermeira y efectos secundários del tratamiento. Utiliza tecnologías sanitarias con el fin de brindar mayor seguridad y efectividad al momento del procedimiento.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Tecnología Biomédica; Enfermería; Radioterapia

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**INTRODUCTION**

Carrying out health education is the nurse's responsibility that allows the exchange of knowledge and the promotion of self-care, which can be carried out through verbal exposure and the use of support materials such as booklets with self-explanatory images.<sup>1</sup>

Educational Technology (ET) can be defined as a set of scientific knowledge that involves the teaching-learning process, which is carried out from the daily experience of health care and research, serving to generate and apply knowledge, develop materials and transform the empirical use of a given practical situation, being an important tool for carrying out the educational work and the performance of the care process.<sup>4</sup>

The use of educational technologies favors the acquisition of knowle-

dge, intellectual development, dissemination of scientific information and the acquisition of new skills.<sup>5</sup>

The nursing consultation is an interactive, systematic and educational activity with the objective of providing comprehensive care to the patient and family, aiming to seek the health-disease context, preventing and/or detecting health problems early and guiding care actions to be carried out.<sup>6</sup>

Resolution No. 358 of the Federal Nursing Council, of October 15, 2009, defines that the nursing consultation must be carried out through the Application of the Systematization of Nursing Assistance (SAE) and has five interconnected stages, aiming at health education: nursing history; nursing diagnosis; nursing planning; nursing implementation and evaluation.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to highlight that the

nursing consultation is a conduct provided for by law and legally supported by the laws that contribute to this professional practice that is exclusive to nurses, ranging from the regulation to the profession -

Law 7,498/1986 - the National Policy of Primary Care, the Ordinance of the Ministry of Health (GM/MS No. 1,625). Still on the bases that formalize the nursing consultation are the instruction manuals of the Ministry of Health and the Basic Attention Notebooks, such manuals will serve as support so that during the nursing consultation, the necessary assistance is given according to the needs and the public presented.<sup>17</sup>

Nurses working in the outpatient clinic carry out Health Education in the Nursing Consultation, for which it is essential to develop certain empathic skills, such as sensitive listening, expression of

thoughts and feelings, respect, compassion, interpersonal interaction, which will favor the creation and strengthening of therapeutic bonds, enabling better decision-making, according to the real needs expressed by people.

Edith Stein conceptualizes empathy in her studies, and states that it is not just a perception of others, or a reflection on the state in which someone is, it is an intuitive attitude that allows the understanding of someone's experience, with intensity and particular ways, because each individual's experience is unique.<sup>18</sup>

Health education is seen as the construction of knowledge, based on the interaction between subjects, as it significantly helps to improve both individual and collective living conditions. This strategy makes it possible to contribute to quality health care, allowing the development of a critical and reflective awareness of the health-disease process. We can say that the health-disease process represents the set of relationships and variables that produce and condition the health and disease state of a population.<sup>19</sup>

This study aims to describe the role of nurses during the nursing consultation performed with cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy.

## METHODS

This is a descriptive study of the experience report type on the experience and performance of nurses in the radiotherapy sector, based on nursing consultations with cancer patients. The interest in the subject arose from the need to share the benefits brought by the nursing consultation performed with cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy. Emphasizing guidance on radiotherapy, side effects, prevention and the importance of self-care, as well as physical and spiritual well-being.

The report was based on the description of the activities performed by the nurse working in that unit, who experienced the process of implantation and structuring of the sector, and necessary

adjustments during nursing care in radiotherapy. As it is an experience report, the present study does not require the approval of the Research Ethics Committee - CEP (Comitê de Ética e Pesquisa), which is in line with resolution 510/2016 of the

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National Health Council.

The experience report is a descriptive research tool, with the objective of reflecting on an action or a set of actions experienced in the professional field and that is of interest to the lay or scientific community.

The experience took place in a private hospital, which is located in the city of São Luís/MA, during the period from March to April 2022. It is a general hospital, with care for cancer patients, which includes all stages and spheres of treatment. It serves several medical specialties, has a multidisciplinary team and has a chemotherapy room, radiotherapy and an oncology inpatient unit, and intensive care.

## RESULTS

With regard to the importance of assistance by nurses to cancer patients, it becomes relevant to share the patient's experience within the health services.

Among the treatment modalities for cancer patients, INCA describes that it can be done through surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, bone marrow transplantation. Radiation therapy is a treatment in which ionizing radiation is used, which destroys tumor cells or prevents cells from multiplying. These radiations are not visible to the naked eye, and occur asymptotically.<sup>8</sup>

Radiation doses and application time are calculated according to the type and size of the tumor. This is done in a controlled way to destroy diseased cells and preserve healthy ones. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 70% of patients diagnosed with cancer will undergo radiotherapy at some stage of their treatment.<sup>9</sup>

In that hospital, the patient initially receives an evaluation from the radiotherapist who, after analyzing the location of the disease lesion and the purpose of the treatment, determines the dose to be submitted and the number of sessions. From then on, the nurse performs the first consultation that includes stages of the nursing process: with health history and physical examination.

Among the information that includes the history, it is described: history of the current disease, oncological treatments that have already been submitted, pro-

posed radiotherapy treatment, number of sessions, personal history, oncological history, allergy history, usual medication, previous surgeries not related to cancer, life habits – smoking, alcohol consumption, sedentary lifestyle – nutritional data. A complete physical examination of the patient and the area to be irradiated is performed, assessing the presence of skin lesions and capillary fragility.

Despite the expected results with the treatment of radiotherapy, the manifestations with radiodermatitis and mucositis that can be presented in the irradiated skin. A form of prevention to minimize this toxicity can be through the nursing consultation, which is considered an essential tool for the patient's quality of life and a favorable condition to offer safe care.<sup>3</sup>

After the consultation with the nurse, there is a referral to the professionals of the multidisciplinary team - nutritionist, physiotherapist, speech therapist - who must evaluate the patient before starting treatment. At that moment, a "Patient Guidebook" is delivered, along with this material, guidelines are given regarding the number of sessions, description of how the irradiated area will present itself, form of hygiene of the place, care before and after radiotherapy sessions.

Nursing care and the use of technologies are interconnected, since nursing is committed to principles, laws and theories, and technology is the expression of this scientific knowledge, and its own transformation. Technologies can be classified as light when we talk about relationships, reception, service management; in soft-hard when we refer to well-structured knowledge, such as the nursing process; and hard when they involve technological equipment such as machines, norms.<sup>14</sup> Regarding the use of the booklet delivered to the patient, we can consider it as a light-hard technology being applied in a practical way.

After this first consultation stage, the patient performs the radiotherapy simulation, where he is positioned in the device, demarcating the irradiation area;

and when this occurs in the head and neck region, a mask is molded, made of thermoplastic material, to facilitate the positioning of the patient in the device.

Consultations also take place during treatment, where patients are evaluated daily, through a brief and objective assessment; and at each cycle of five sessions, or in case of clinical complications, the consultations are carried out in a complete way, alternating between consultation with a doctor and with a nurse. At this point, the patient's tolerance to treatment, toxicity - nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dysuria, hematuria, diet acceptance, presence of bleeding is evaluated. An evaluation of the skin that is subjected to irradiation is performed, analyzing the presence of radiodermatitis, or desquamation. Based on this evaluation, a decision will be made on continuity of treatment, dose adjustment, need for hydration and skin protection.

Among the main adverse reactions caused by radiotherapy are: mucositis, xerostomia, osteoradionecrosis, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, xerosis of the skin, toxic erythema, cranial neuropathies causing otologic reactions, pain, dry mouth, constipation, diarrhea, malabsorption, malaise, dehydration, dizziness, headache, alopecia, dry skin, itching, voice change and restlessness.<sup>8</sup>

Adverse reactions will depend on the volume and location to be irradiated, the total dose, fractionation, age and clinical conditions of the patient. Acute reactions occur during treatment and are reversible, and late reactions, commonly irreversible, resulting in permanent disability and limitation and worsening of quality of life.<sup>15</sup>

It is clear then that the nurse plays a fundamental role in patient care in radiotherapy programming. This professional personalizes care, advises on side effects, performs the steps of the nursing process, and carries out the therapeutic plan for the patient. The nursing consultation aims to guide the patient and family on the care they should have before each session and at the end of the treatment.

The implementation of nursing care in radiotherapy becomes an essential foundation, which elevates standardized, documented and recorded care from the guidelines provided in the nursing consultation. The nurse promotes comprehensive, humanized, planned, organized care, in addition to supervising, executing and evaluating all the actions of the nursing team.<sup>10</sup>

During this type of assistance, and all the above, the application and use of educational technologies is evident, classified as follows: light, light-hard and hard technologies. Where light technologies are applied from contact with the patient, sensitivity, reception, the establishment of a bond with the patient during all stages of treatment, during all consultations, whether they are initial consultations and/or review consultations; the application of soft-hard technologies, are evidenced in this nursing consultation, through the sharing of knowledge about the steps that will be exposed, delivery of a guide booklet, and clarification of doubts during the treatment. And hard technologies are exactly the use of high technology to improve health care, which includes radiotherapy, with updated equipment, with low toxicity, with more localized irradiation, with fewer side effects.<sup>14</sup>

Technologies positively impact the work process of health professionals through the scientificity of care, with the premises of best practices and patient safety, qualifying care for the individual, family and community. Nursing uses numerous technologies during its care practice, with protocols being the most used resources.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Nursing care in radiotherapy is complemented by the nursing consultation, as it guides the patient and their family on the effects caused by radiation, as well as provides guidance on care to be taken at home. It is also possible to carry out frequent assessment of the exposed area,



as well as follow up on possible toxicity. These assessments and guidelines are necessary at all stages of treatment: before, during and after. The nurse also indicates the use of an appropriate product according to the reaction caused on the skin, demonstrating that the performance of this professional is essential in the prevention and early intervention of possible reactions caused by toxicity.

From the nursing consultation, the establishment of a bond, the patient feels welcomed, safe to perform the treatment, confident; a lower rate of loss or evasion

is perceived. The role of the nursing team, along with the other members of the multidisciplinary team, is extremely important for the success of treatment with radiotherapy, it is of paramount importance that the nursing team is updated on treatments and protocols. The nurse is an educator member of the team and the family. The use of support materials during the nursing consultation – folder, leaflets, booklets – is necessary, and it is important to assess the cognitive, cultural and social level of the patient and family to understand the exposed material.

Care is performed in a simple way as guidance to patients/family members and is more elaborate according to the patient's report, thus being personalized, according to the complaint, diagnosis, reactions that each one presents. The benefits that care and guidance bring to the patient through the nursing consultation are of extreme value as they empower the patient with knowledge about their treatment, supporting and guaranteeing its continuity, without loss, without evasion, and reduction of discontinuity.

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