

## Perioperative nursing care for children with autism spectrum disorder: integrative review

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Cuidados perioperatorios de enfermería para niños con trastorno del espectro autista: una revisión integradora

### RESUMO

Objetivo: Compreender as evidências científicas relacionadas à assistência de enfermagem no perioperatório em crianças com transtorno do espectro autista. Método: Revisão integrativa da literatura, nas bases de dados: Medical Literature Analyses and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) via National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (PubMed), Centro Latino-Americano e do Caribe de Informação em Ciências da Saúde (LILACS), Bases de Dados de Enfermagem (BDENF), Índice Bibliográfico Español en Ciencias de la Salud (IBECS), Centro Nacional de Informação de Ciências Médicas de Cuba (CUMED). Resultados: A amostra foi composta por quatro artigos científicos, considerando-se os critérios estabelecidos. Evidencia-se a necessidade da equipe multidisciplinar, envolvimento dos cuidadores e relevância da construção dos planos de cuidados específicos observando a integralidade da criança. Conclusão: Ressalta-se a importância desta temática e escassez de estudos, além da motivação para novas pesquisas envolvendo o grupo, visto a indispensabilidade de um cuidado equitativo, humanizado, integral e prioritário.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Transtorno do Espectro Autista; Enfermagem Perioperatória; Enfermagem Pediátrica; Enfermagem Médico-Cirúrgica.

### ABSTRACT

Objective: To understand the scientific evidence related to perioperative nursing care in children with autism spectrum disorder. Method: Integrative literature review in the following databases: Medical Literature Analyses and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) via the National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (PubMed), Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (LILACS), Nursing Databases (BDENF), Spanish Bibliographic Index on Health Sciences (IBECS), Cuban National Medical Sciences Information Center (CUMED). Results: The sample consisted of four scientific articles, considering the established criteria. The need for a multidisciplinary team, the involvement of caregivers and the importance of constructing specific care plans that take into account the child's integrality were highlighted. Conclusion: The importance of this theme and the scarcity of studies are highlighted, as well as the motivation for new research involving the group, given the indispensability of equitable, humanized, comprehensive and priority care.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Autism Spectrum Disorder; Perioperative Nursing; Pediatric Nursing; Medical-Surgical Nursing.

### RESUMEN

Objetivo: Conocer la evidencia científica relacionada con los cuidados perioperatorios de enfermería en niños con trastorno del espectro autista. Método: Revisión bibliográfica integradora utilizando las siguientes bases de datos: Medical Literature Analyses and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) a través de la National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (PubMed), Centro Latinoamericano y del Caribe de Información en Ciencias de la Salud (LILACS), Bases de Datos de Enfermería (BDENF), Índice Bibliográfico Español en Ciencias de la Salud (IBECS), Centro Nacional de Información en Ciencias Médicas de Cuba (CUMED). Resultados: La muestra estuvo constituida por cuatro artículos científicos, considerando los criterios establecidos. Se destacó la necesidad de un equipo multidisciplinario, la participación de los cuidadores y la importancia de construir planes de cuidados específicos que tengan en cuenta la integralidad del niño. Conclusión: Se destaca la importancia del tema y la escasez de estudios, así como la motivación para nuevas investigaciones que involucren al grupo, dada la indispensabilidad de una atención equitativa, humanizada, integral y prioritaria.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Trastorno del Espectro Autista; Enfermería Perioperatoria; Enfermería Pediátrica; Enfermería Médico-Quirúrgica.

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### INTRODUCTION

Perioperative nursing care refers to the care provided to patients before, during and after a surgical procedure. This assistance is crucial to ensuring the patient's safety and well-being throughout the surgical process.<sup>(1-2)</sup>

Therefore, the Systematization of Nursing Care is an organized approach to professional work in terms of method, personnel and instruments, thus implementing the operationalization of care through the Nursing process.<sup>(3)</sup>

Resolution of the Federal Nursing Council No. 736 of January 17, 2024, provides for the implementation of the Nursing Process (NP) in every socio-environmental context where nursing care occurs. In this context, the appli-

cation of the Nursing Process is an essential tool for professional practice, understood and systematized in five interrelated, interdependent, recurring and cyclical stages, namely: Nursing assessment, nursing diagnosis, planning, implementation and evolution of nursing.<sup>(4)</sup>

The execution of the Nursing Process (NP) must be conducted in an intentional and methodical manner in all socio-environmental contexts in which Nursing care is provided. Furthermore, it is essential that the EP relies on conceptual and operational theoretical structures that provide descriptive and explanatory properties as a basis for its actions.<sup>(4)</sup>

Thus, the Nursing Process allows a personalized approach, taking into account the individual characteristics of

the patient, their specific needs and their responses to the surgical procedure, resulting in more effective and targeted care. Furthermore, it contributes to patient safety through the identification and prevention of potential complications and risks during the perioperative period in the implementation of careful assessment and continuous monitoring of the patient.<sup>(1)</sup>

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of careful assessment and continuous monitoring of the patient.<sup>(5)</sup>

Perioperative nursing care is based on up-to-date scientific knowledge, guidelines and clinical evidence, aiming to ensure that nursing practices adopted during the perioperative period are based on best practices and up-to-date research, increasing the effectiveness and safety of the care provided. And so, the process of perioperative care brings numerous benefits, including individualization of care, patient safety, effective communication, continuity of care and improvement in the quality of care.<sup>(1-2)</sup>

Hospitalization of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents specific challenges due to the individual characteristics of this population. Furthermore, the available literature on hospital admissions for children with ASD reveals a series of challenges that these individuals face during their hospital stay.<sup>(6)</sup>

The perioperative period comprises three distinct phases: preoperative, intraoperative and postoperative, each of these phases is initiated and completed sequentially, following events that outline the patient's experience in the anesthesia and surgery process.<sup>(7)</sup>

During the surgical process, the absence of family life and a change in environment can cause several challenges for the child in the psychological aspect, given that it is a highly invasive procedure, associated with risks of death, in addition to uncertainty regarding the consequences of this intervention in your life.<sup>(8)</sup>

Children with ASD, during the hospitalization process, present behaviors that require nursing attention for diagnoses, some of which are: Impaired verbal communication, risk of stress, ineffective impulse control, impaired social interaction, risk of impaired paternity or maternity, risk of impaired bonding, defensive coping, risk of unbalanced malnutrition, risk of ineffective protection, risk of anxiety, risk

of change stress syndrome, risk of sleep pattern disturbance, among other Nursing diagnoses that can be identified according to the individual needs of each child in their hospitalization context.<sup>(6)</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the lack of understanding and knowledge of health professionals about ASD results in difficulties in communication and adequate adaptations to the hospital environment, culminating in additional stress and anxiety for these children. In this sense, it is essential to promote awareness and training of health professionals to better meet the specific needs of these patients during hospitalization.<sup>(9)</sup>

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In view of this scenario, the relevance of this topic in question is justified, addressing the need to identify effective care strategies focused on children with ASD and the systematization of nursing care in the perioperative period, aiming to provide greater comfort, tranquility and safety for these patients when undergoing a surgical procedure.

Given this perspective, the research in question aimed to understand the scientific evidence related to perioperative nursing care for children with autism spectrum disorder.

## METHOD

The type of study constitutes an integrative literature review, which aims to gather and synthesize research results on a delimited topic or question, in a systematic and organized way, in

order to contribute to the deepening of knowledge about the topic investigated.<sup>(11)</sup>

The research was conducted through the following steps: identifying the topic and choosing the research question for preparing the review; the definition of criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies/sampling, specification of the information to be extracted from the selected studies, evaluation of the studies incorporated in the integrative review, corresponding to the analysis; and finally, the interpretation of the results.<sup>(11)</sup>

The review of literature applied to nursing contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge in this area, providing support for evidence-based practice, clinical decision-making and the formulation of health policies. Furthermore, it allows the identification of gaps in knowledge, encouraging new research that can fill these gaps and improve the quality of nursing care.<sup>(12)</sup>

Therefore, the survey of scientific production was carried out in the period from June 2023, through searches in the Virtual Health Library (VHL), Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Information Center (LILACS), Nursing Databases (BDENF), Spanish Bibliographic Index in Health Sciences (IBECs), Cuba's National Medical Sciences Information Center (CUMED) and Medical Literature Analyzes and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) via the National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (PubMed).

For this study, the following question was created: What is the scientific evidence related to perioperative nursing care in children with autism spectrum disorder? Thus, pairwise crossings of the descriptors were carried out: "Autism Spectrum Disorder", "Perioperative Nursing", "Autism Spectrum Disorder", "Perioperative Nursing" using the Boolean operator AND, standardized by the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) and the Medical Subject

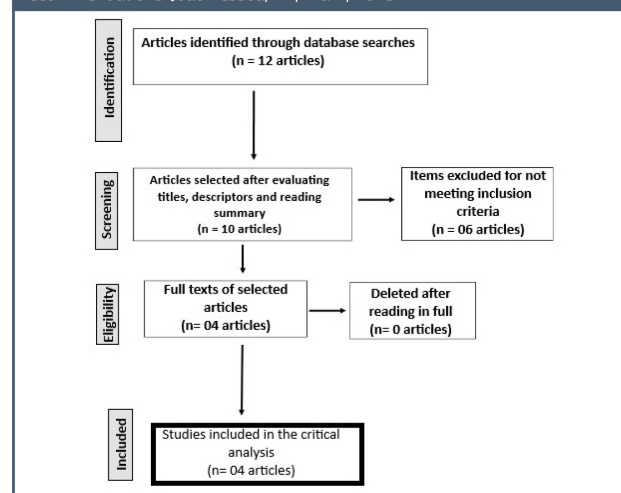
Headings (MeSH) terminologies descriptors.

The following inclusion criteria were defined: studies that answer the guiding question, without a time frame given the scarcity of literature, in Portuguese, English or Spanish. And as exclusion criteria: any other types of studies that are not in the format of a scientific article; such as articles in newspapers, conference summaries, editorials, theses, dissertations, in short, all gray literature.

In this sense, to structure this integrative literature review, a semi-structured data collection instrument, developed by the researchers, was used, containing items such as: the identification of the journal, the place where the study was developed, the database, the type of publication and the methodological characteristics pointed out by the authors, and this was done with the aim of having the main information from these manuscripts. Finally, the key results presented will list credibility and point out possible gaps in the scientific data evidenced in these studies.

As this is an integrative literature review, this research did not require prior approval from the Research Ethics Committee (CEP), in accordance with Resolution no. 466/12 (CNS/MS), as all data will be available for free access by the population, not requiring ethical secrecy.<sup>(13)</sup>

Figure 01- Flowchart for selecting research studies, according to PRISMA-ScR recommendations. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2023



## RESULTS

The sample consisted of 04 articles, which were analyzed using the criteria of inclusion, exclusion, guiding question, a careful reading of the selected articles was carried out, the arrangement of the collected data and the discussion of the results, as described in the Systematic Reviews and Meta-A-

nalyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA) flowchart<sup>(14)</sup>.

Considering the studies considered in the sample, studies in English were obtained in their entirety, validating the relevance of the theme at an international level. Furthermore, it demonstrated the fragility of Brazilian research on this topic.

Table 01- Articles selected from databases relating to perioperative nursing care for children with autism spectrum disorder. João Pessoa, Paraíba, 2023.

ARTICLE IDENTIFICATION	AUTHORS	YEAR	LANGUAGE	STUDY TYPE	OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
A1- The Health-care Experience of Autistic Patients in Orthopaedic Surgery and Closely Related Fields: A Scoping Review	Criss Steven D; Kakulamarri Shrayya; Xu Raylin F; Fajardo Maya; Keeney Tamra; Tolchin Dorothy W; May Collin J.	2023	English	Bibliographic research/ Scope review	Understand the experience of autistic patients receiving orthopedic care and identify existing interventions or accommodations

A2- Assessing the perioperative communication needs of a patient with learning disabilities: An holistic case study approach	Sue Wilkinson	2018	English	Case report/Qualitative research	Detail a plan of care for an 18-year-old male patient with autism spectrum disorder with a moderate level of learning disability who has been scheduled for a tonsillectomy at a local hospital.
A3- Benefits of an individualized perioperative plan for children with autism spectrum disorder	Jo S. Swartz; Karen E. Amos; Mira Brindas; Linda G. Menina; M. Ruth Graham.	2017	English	Documentary research/ case study/	Determine the utility of an individualized plan based on the decision to provide preoperative sedation stratified by autism spectrum severity level.
A4- Care of patients with autism spectrum disorder undergoing surgery for cancer	Deena Damsky Dell; Maria Felliccia; Lisa Hicks; Erin Longstreth-Papsun; Sue Politsky; Courtney Trommer.	2008	English	Case report	Discuss creative clinical solutions to challenging patient care problems.

Source: Research data from selected studies. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2023.

A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construction of an individualized care plan: they recommend the development of an individualized approach to a flexible perioperative plan.</li> <li>- Assessment of the plan by the child's caregiver for implementation in the perioperative period: the patient's caregiver acts as a consultant for the multidisciplinary team in validating and adapting the care plan.</li> <li>- Need for a multidisciplinary team in perioperative follow-up: successful implementation of the perioperative care plan requires an adequate number of professionals in the multidisciplinary team.</li> <li>- Supply of toys: predetermined toys, electronic devices, cell phones with videos, educational games, among other child devices.</li> </ul>
A4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Controle e redução da ansiedade: pacientes com autismo são difíceis de lidar em um ambiente hospitalar porque podem ficar ansiosos e agitados por mudanças na rotina ou no ambiente, assim a equipe deve trabalhar neste controle e redução.</li> <li>- Promoção de um ambiente aconchegante: Vídeos, fotos e bichos de pelúcia favoritos podem ser estimulados para serem trazidos de casa.</li> <li>- Avaliação da dor e ansiedade: avaliar a dor e a ansiedade em um paciente não verbal com comprometimento cognitivo é difícil, assim, a avaliação deve ser baseada na observação comportamental.</li> <li>- Administração das medicações para controle da dor conforme prescrição: Combinar a medicação com o nível de dor é importante para qualquer paciente, independentemente da cognição.</li> <li>- Observação contínua das expressões: observação do comportamento, medir a expressão facial, atentar-se para as atividades de defesa.</li> <li>- Avaliação de infecções da ferida operatória e alterações: os cuidadores devem ser capacitados para avaliação de infecções de feridas e alterações na ferida operatória.</li> <li>- Educação em saúde no momento da alta hospitalar: a equipe de saúde deve discutir as instruções e orientações de alta com os familiares/cuidadores.</li> </ul>

Source: Research data from selected studies. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2023.

Table 02- Articles selected from the databases referring to the characterization of perioperative nursing care for children with autism spectrum disorder. João Pessoa, Paraíba, 2023.

ARTICLE IDENTIFICATION	PERIOPERATIVE CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clinical and Perioperative Management: recommends creating positive health interaction and engagement for autistic patients in orthopedic surgery.</li> <li>- Pain control: allowed most procedures to be performed in an outpatient setting, reducing family disruption associated with hospital admissions.</li> <li>- Therapeutic Interventions: animal-assisted therapy, aquatic environment therapy, music therapy and movement-based therapy.</li> <li>- Caregiver training and involvement: involve parents and caregivers in the care process.</li> </ul>
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construction of a specific care plan for the patient: the care plan detailed the individual aspects of the patient's care, supporting professionals in carrying out appropriate interventions, at the right time and framed in the good practice guide.</li> <li>- Carrying out the nursing consultation: provides important information about the patient, including personal details, the type of medication they were taking and any pre-existing health conditions.</li> <li>- Anxiety management: empathy and trust need to be established and maintained to create and manage an enabling environment, an awareness of the patient's emotions and anxieties.</li> <li>- Management of nausea and vomiting: antiemetics should be administered as prescribed to prevent vomiting and agitation.</li> <li>- Establish effective communication with the healthcare team: produce effective communication with the aim of reducing patient anxiety and improving health outcomes.</li> <li>- Pain assessment and management: use of validated scales to measure patient pain and doctors planning postoperative analgesia.</li> <li>- Risk of bleeding and dehydration: due to impaired oral intake aimed to manage the patient's postoperative fluid intake and understand the patient's reluctance to swallow post-operative liquids (due to pain) led to the suggestion of offering popsicles on sticks.</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

This review presented a scarcity of studies, given the criteria used on the proposed theme. Therefore, this fact shows that despite alarming numbers reflecting serious public health problems, there are still issues that need to be discussed.

Therefore, based on the studies analyzed, the nursing team is responsible for monitoring children with ASD in an organized and systematic way regarding pain, comfort level, anxiety, agitation, dehydration and possible complications. Since some children with ASD may exhibit anxiety, agitation or resistance to invasive procedures. <sup>(10;15-17)</sup>

Therefore, the multidisciplinary team must develop individualized behavioral management strategies, such as the use of distraction techniques, positive reinforcement, prior preparation or use of

prescription medications. <sup>(15-17)</sup>

It is also necessary to frame communication strategies adapted to assess and address their basic human needs to provide holistic care. Furthermore, offer emotional support and comfort resources, such as toys or sensory activities, to help the child calm down and recover adequately in the hospital unit in question, aiming for the time necessary for their recovery. <sup>(10;15-17)</sup>

Lack of familiarity with the specific needs of these children can lead to high levels of stress, anxiety and challenging behaviors during hospitalization. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the importance of family support during the perioperative period, keeping parents or guardians informed about the process, reassuring them and clarifying their doubts, in addition to encouraging the presence of a family caregiver during the

preliminary preparation and the child's stay in the recovery room, if possible and permitted by the hospital. <sup>(10;15-17)</sup>

Caregivers are an essential part of this perioperative process, who recognize the needs and singularities of their children, aiming to implement individualized care plans. An important strategy for assembling and organizing the care plan is that it can be developed via telephone call with the caregiver, avoiding the need for potentially stressful additional contact in the preoperative period. <sup>(10)</sup>

Preventing complications after surgery is difficult in a patient with autism because of inherent language disorders, impaired behaviors, understanding, and socialization, as well as lack of appropriate fear response to danger and unusual reactions to the taste and smell of food. Therefore, patients may become uncooperative if they do not understand the

# Revisão Integrativa EN

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need for care and the surgical procedure they underwent.<sup>(16)</sup>

From this perspective of care, it is essential to promote awareness and training of health professionals to better meet the specific needs of these children during hospitalization for a surgical procedure. Furthermore, the standardization of care approaches is also essential to facilitate the comparison of results and the dissemination of best practices.<sup>(9)</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated perioperative nursing care in children with autism

spectrum disorder, enabling a synthesis for the practical contribution of nursing care to the public in question in hospital admissions for surgical procedures in general. The studies noted the importance of the multidisciplinary team, the involvement of caregivers in in-hospital care and the need to create specific care plans according to the needs of the child in question.

Our results demonstrate the main nursing care for this population: control, reduction and assessment of pain and anxiety, training with caregivers, construction of specific care plans, carrying out nursing consultations

and management of nausea and vomiting. As well as establishing effective communication with the healthcare team, and the need for a multidisciplinary team in perioperative monitoring, continuous observation of expressions, assessment of surgical wound infections and changes and health education at the time of hospital discharge.

In view of this research, we can observe the importance of this topic and the scarcity of studies, in addition to the motivation for new research involving the group in focus, given the need for equitable, humane, specific, comprehensive and priority care.

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