

It's Not Just a Woman's Thing: Primary Care Nurses' Perspectives On Male Breast Cancer

Não é Só Coisa de Mulher: Perspectivas de Enfermeiros de Atenção Básica à Saúde Frente Ao Câncer de Mama Masculino

No Es Solo Cosa de Mujeres: Perspectivas de Las Enfermeras de Atención Primaria de Salud Sobre El Câncer de Mama En Los Masculinos

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar fatores facilitadores das ações educativas direcionadas ao homem frente ao câncer de mama no âmbito da atenção primária à saúde em um município do Oeste de Santa Catarina na perspectiva da enfermagem. Metodologia: Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo, exploratório utilizando, enfermeiros da atenção básica. Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas, gravadas e registros de campos. Resultados e Discussões: Este estudo mostrou como resultados as concepções e conhecimentos dos profissionais enfermeiros frente às ações educativas direcionadas ao homem com câncer de mama e os cuidados prestados mediante à pacientes masculinos com diagnóstico de câncer de mama, bem como os impactos causados pela doença. Conclusões: Foi possível observar a necessidade de informar a população sobre o câncer de mama masculino, já que os entrevistados não fazem uso de nenhuma ferramenta de abordagem deste assunto em suas consultas ou ações de enfermagem para desenvolver as ações educativas direcionadas ao homem com câncer de mama.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Educação em saúde; Câncer de mama; Neoplasias Malignas de mama.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to identify factors that facilitate educational actions aimed at men with breast cancer in the context of primary health care in a city in the West of Santa Catarina from the perspective of nursing. Method: This is a qualitative, exploratory study using primary care nurses. Semi-structured, recorded interviews and field records were conducted. Results and Discussions: This study showed as results the conceptions and knowledge of nursing professionals regarding educational actions aimed at men with breast cancer and the care provided to male patients diagnosed with breast cancer, as well as the impacts caused by the disease. Conclusions: It was possible to observe the need to inform the population about male breast cancer, since the interviewees do not use any tool to approach this subject in their consultations or nursing actions to develop educational actions aimed at men with breast cancer.

DESCRIPTORS: Health education; Breast cancer; Malignant neoplasms of the breast.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio fue identificar los factores facilitadores de las acciones educativas dirigidas al hombre frente al cáncer de mama en el ámbito de la atención primaria en un municipio del Oeste de Santa Catarina desde la perspectiva de la enfermería. Metodología: Se trata de un estudio cualitativo, exploratorio, utilizando enfermeros de la atención primaria. Se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas, grabadas, y registros de campo. Resultados y Discusiones: Este estudio mostró como resultados las concepciones y conocimientos de los profesionales enfermeros frente a las acciones educativas dirigidas al hombre con cáncer de mama y los cuidados prestados a los pacientes masculinos con diagnóstico de cáncer de mama, así como los impactos causados por la enfermedad. Conclusiones: Fue posible observar la necesidad de informar a la población sobre el cáncer de mama masculino, ya que los entrevistados no utilizan ninguna herramienta de abordaje de este tema en sus consultas o acciones de enfermería para desarrollar las acciones educativas dirigidas al hombre con cáncer de mama.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Educación en salud; Câncer de mama; Neoplasias malignas de mama.

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INTRODUCTION

Cancer (CA) is a disease caused by the abnormal growth of cells with mutations in their DNA, generating new mutated cells, related to several factors for its development. One of the cancers that most affects women is breast cancer, which is a problem in Brazil and worldwide. For this reason, prevention, diagnosis and treatment policies for the disease were created,

but breast cancer does not only affect women, it also affects men, although in rarer cases, around 1%.⁽¹⁾

In recent years, there has been an increase in cases of male breast cancer (MBC). The prevalence is proportional to age, and is rare before the age of 30. The average age for diagnosis is around 60 to 70 years, which shows that men are diagnosed at an older age when compared to women.⁽²⁾ Several factors are related to an increased risk

of developing the disease, such as: age, endocrine factors, reproductive history, behavioral factors, environmental factors, and genetic/hereditary factors and syndromes such as Klinefelter's syndrome. However, in some diagnoses of the disease, age is the only risk factor found.⁽¹⁾

The main signs and symptoms of male breast cancer are detection of painless nodules in the subareolar region, serous or bloody secretion, pain

and skin retraction. ⁽³⁾ The diagnosis is similar to that of women (mammography, ultrasound, biopsy and aspiration puncture) but in many cases the patient is diagnosed in advanced stages of the disease because they present late clinical manifestations. Treatment depends on the stage of the disease, initially it can be preventive, surgical, and then radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hormone therapy. Furthermore, in mammograms, breast cancer in men usually presents irregular, hyperdense and retroareolar borders. ⁽³⁾

Although female breast cancer is better known and discussed among health professionals, male breast cancer does not have as much repercussion, despite the significant increase in new cases. The incidence of male breast cancer has increased significantly from 0.86 to 1.06 per 100,000 men in the last 26 years, an increase caused by a lack of awareness of the signs and symptoms of the disease. ⁽⁴⁾ The authors also point out that women are diagnosed 10 years earlier than men, resulting in a lower survival rate in male patients.

To this end, nurses are the agents who directly address the strategy of care, health education and education for health, and are extremely important in promoting health and preventing diseases and injuries. For Ribeiro, nurses are key professionals in the process of preventing and detecting cancer, and are the closest contact with the community. ⁽⁵⁾ Therefore, it is the one that detects risk factors, and can then establish, through strategies, means of preventing modifiable factors and/or worsening non-modifiable factors. Furthermore, the authors point out that another important factor is health education, the basis for changing social thinking. To this end, the professional needs to be trained to clearly reach the target audience, in order to monitor these patients safely and with technical-scientific knowledge.

From this perspective, even though it is considered uncommon, male breast

cancer deserves greater attention from health professionals and government agencies responsible for developing public policies that outline health care models. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the factors that facilitate educational actions aimed at men facing breast cancer within the scope of primary health care in a municipality in the West of Santa Catarina.

METHOD

This is a descriptive, exploratory, qualitative study. The research was conducted using the exploratory method, which sought to understand the educational activities of nursing professionals at the MBC. The subjects of this research were nurses who provide care to the population in Basic Health Units in a municipality in the west of Santa Catarina. Data collection was carried out through face-to-face and individual interviews with the research subjects, 6 nurses, respecting the ethical and legal aspects. The research was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS), and was approved on September 15, 2022, under CAAE 61111822.0.0000.5564.

The inclusion criteria for professionals were nurses who work in primary health care and who develop care activities for individuals with more than six months of professional experience. The 5 basic health units listed to carry out the collections were included using criteria of having the largest population in the municipality with family health coverage.

The analysis and interpretation of the data used the Discourse of the Collective Subject (DCS) technique. This technique is used to transcribe similar speeches/thoughts of a collective in the first person singular, thus creating a syntactic I that, while signaling the presence of an individual subject of the discourse, expresses a collective reference insofar as this I speaks for or on

behalf of a collective ⁽⁶⁾.

In view of this, four methodological figures are proposed for the creation of DCSS, namely: key expressions (KEs), central ideas (CIs), anchoring (ACs) and finally the Discourse of the Collective Subject (DCS). ⁽⁶⁾

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Six nurses who work in primary health care were interviewed. All of these interviewees are female, and none of them have a specialization in Oncology, but in other areas: one has a postgraduate degree in emergency care, one in women's health, and the others do not have any specialization. Only one had contact with men with breast cancer.

All of these stated that they use health education as a tool during nursing consultations. Regarding the length of time working as a PHC nurse, it was found that professionals range from 2 to 12 years.

A parallel can be drawn and identify that the more experienced the professional is, the more varied the dynamics and diligent forms of education about breast cancer. Studies indicate that the majority of men suffer more from chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) than women, but they seek health care centers less, resulting in high morbidity and mortality rates. Some studies describe that culture, lack of time and responsibility for work explain the low adherence of men to health services. ⁽⁷⁾

During the interviews, the issue of men's vulnerability to breast cancer was raised, which was hypothetically reinforced by the low demand for care at Family Health Centers. The nurses emphasized the need for strategies that promote men's access to and adherence to health services, including awareness campaigns and more inclusive care. They also highlighted the importance of training for health professionals that considers the specificities of this pop-

ulation.

All participants acknowledged the importance of scientific updates to support patient care. Continuing Health Education (CHE) was cited as an essential tool for improving professional practice. In the oncology context, resources such as the National Cancer Institute's book on early detection of breast cancer were mentioned, even though the material does not directly address male breast cancer.⁽¹⁾

The importance of including information about male breast cancer in educational materials was highlighted, considering that states such as Rio Grande do Sul and Maranhão have a higher incidence of this condition. Given the population's low knowledge about MBC, it is extremely important to focus attention on male breast cancer in order to inform the community in general about this disease. In addition, the need for strategies to adequately serve the transsexual population, respecting their specificities, was highlighted.

Health professionals have difficulty meeting and providing care for the specific demands of this public, which can generate discrimination on the part of professionals, causing an evasion of trans identities in health services.⁽⁸⁾

Another point highlighted was that participants highlighted the need to integrate technological advances into clinical practice, especially for the diagnosis and treatment of male breast cancer, emphasizing that these technologies can expand access and improve the quality of care.⁽⁹⁾

Health campaigns, such as "Blue November", are recognized as important tools for raising awareness and preventing diseases. However, the actions carried out in PHC units have focused predominantly on prostate cancer, with little emphasis on male breast cancer.⁽¹⁰⁾ During the interviews, the nurses suggested the inclusion of educational materials on the topic, with accessible language, to increase awareness among

the population and encourage self-care, including breast self-examination.

Blue November is aimed at men's health. In 2021, the Ministry of Health used a line of health care for men, called "Linha Azul", but there is no information about male breast cancer, only awareness was raised about prostate cancer.⁽¹¹⁾

Male breast cancer can have significant impacts on patients' lives, including psychological, social and economic changes. A study indicates that men diagnosed with breast cancer may express positive/negative coping strategies during the illness process.⁽¹²⁾

At this point, the need to inform the population about the disease and the necessary care was emphasized in order to reduce the negative impacts. One of the ways to inform the population about MBC is to raise awareness of the issue beyond prostate cancer and include CMM. To this end, professionals can use Health Education as tools through campaigns, brochures, lectures, campaigns in companies and industries, and social media.⁽⁹⁾

The research highlighted the importance of health education, professional training and the use of technologies in the care of men with breast cancer. Despite advances, there are still challenges in including this topic in PHC practices, requiring efforts to promote greater awareness, access to health services and early diagnosis, in addition to strategies that respect the specificities of different audiences, such as trans men.

CONCLUSION

Cancer is a serious public health problem, due to the high number of diagnoses and high mortality in women. As for male breast cancer (MBC), it is common to be unaware of this condition, since it is rare. The lack of information and the difficulty men have in seeking health services negatively impact treatment, since late diagnoses lead to more advanced stages of the dis-

ease.

After diagnosis, men face emotional and social changes, such as concerns about work, masculinity, routine and the effects of treatment. The research highlighted the lack of knowledge about MBC among health professionals, possibly due to the limited dissemination of information by the Ministry of Health and institutions. None of the professionals interviewed had direct contact with MBC patients or addressed the topic in consultations, but they recognized the need for training to improve care, especially during Blue November.

The participants suggested educational actions aimed at the population about MBC. It is time to raise awareness among the population to include MBC beyond prostate cancer. To this end, professionals can use Health Education as tools through campaigns, brochures, lectures, campaigns in companies and industries, and social media (BORGES, 2020). These tools are essential to promote health education and raise awareness about the topic.

The research highlighted the importance of health education, professional training, and the use of technologies in the care of men with breast cancer. Despite advances, there are still challenges in including this topic in PHC practices, requiring efforts to promote greater awareness, access to health services, and early diagnosis, in addition to strategies that respect the specificities of different audiences, such as trans men.

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