

Experience of nurses in an intensive care unit for patients with COVID-19: experience report

Experiencia de enfermeras en una unidad de cuidados intensivos para pacientes con COVID-19: informe de experiencia

Vivência de enfermeiros em unidade de terapia intensiva destinada a pacientes com COVID-19: relato de experiência

Eva Natalina Ferreira Costa¹

ORCID: 0000-0003-2673-6967

Ivo da Silva Soares²

ORCID: 0000-0001-7163-3073

Flávia Martins Branco¹

ORCID: 0000-0003-3484-8555

Dayane Martins da Silva**Campos¹**

ORCID: 0000-0002-0193-4417

Ana Paula Soares Conceição**Benjamin³**

ORCID: 0000-0002-1510-7439

Ana Cristina de Rodrigues³

ORCID: 0000-0001-5254-3515

Adriane da Cunha Aragão Rios**Fagundes⁴**

ORCID: 0000-0003-3041-598X

¹Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

²Centro Universitário IBMR. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

³Universidade Estácio de Sá. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

⁴Faculdades Integradas de Ariquemes. Piauí, Brazil.

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Corresponding author:

Eva Natalina Ferreira Costa

E-mail: evacostaferreira@gmail.com

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Abstract

The aim was to report the performance of nurses in Adult Intensive Care Units at this time of pandemic. This is an experience report, of a descriptive type, with a qualitative approach, based on the experience of nurses, in the current moment of pandemic, in relation to time, the research is delimited from the practices and assistance of these professionals in a Health Unit. Exclusive Intensive Care for patients diagnosed with COVID-19, from February to July 2021. Continuing and continuing education in health is essential for the quality of care provided in the care of patients with SARS-CoV-2. Maintaining a communication relationship between the multidisciplinary teams is very important in view of the experienced scenario. The pandemic scenario has a framework of great challenges for the entire population, referring to nursing professionals, care actions, care practices, training, remodeling of work management. However, the preparation of professionals with knowledge about the new disease COVID-19, critically ill patients and the use of new technologies is notorious, as well as providing an adequate workplace

Descriptors: Nursing Care; Nursing; Pandemic; Coronavirus Infections; Intensive Care Unit.

Resumén

El objetivo fue reportar el desempeño de las enfermeras en las Unidades de Cuidados Intensivos de Adultos en este momento de pandemia. Se trata de un relato de experiencia, de tipo descriptivo, con abordaje cualitativo, basado en la experiencia de enfermeras, en el momento actual de pandemia, en relación al tiempo, la investigación se delimita desde las prácticas y asistencia de estos profesionales en un ámbito de la Salud. Unidad. Cuidados intensivos exclusivos para pacientes diagnosticados de COVID-19, de febrero a julio de 2021. La educación continua y continua en salud es fundamental para la calidad de la atención brindada en la atención de los pacientes con SARS-CoV-2. Mantener una relación de comunicación entre los equipos multidisciplinarios es muy importante a la vista del escenario vivido. El escenario pandémico tiene un marco de grandes desafíos para toda la población, referidos a profesionales de enfermería, acciones de cuidado, prácticas de cuidado, capacitación, remodelación de la gestión del trabajo. Sin embargo, es notoria la preparación de profesionales con conocimientos sobre: la nueva enfermedad COVID-19, pacientes críticos y el uso de nuevas tecnologías, además de brindar un lugar de trabajo adecuado.

Descriptorios: Atención de Enfermería; Enfermería; Pandemia; Infecciones por Coronavirus; Unidades de Cuidados Intensivos.

Resumo

Objetivou-se relatar a atuação de enfermeiros de Unidades de Terapia Intensiva Adulto neste momento de pandemia. Trata-se de um relato de experiência, do tipo descritivo, com abordagem qualitativa, baseado na experiência de enfermeiros, no atual momento de pandemia, em relação ao tempo, a pesquisa delimita-se a partir das práticas e assistência destes profissionais em Unidade de Terapia Intensiva exclusiva para pacientes diagnosticados com COVID-19, período de fevereiro a julho do ano de 2021. A educação continuada e permanente em saúde é imprescindível para qualidade da assistência prestada no atendimento ao paciente com SARS-CoV-2. Manter entre as equipes multiprofissionais uma relação de comunicação é muito importante diante do cenário experienciado. O cenário pandêmico tem um marco de grandes desafios para toda população, referente aos profissionais de enfermagem, as ações de cuidado, das práticas assistenciais, treinamentos, remodelação da gestão de trabalho. Contudo é notório a preparação dos profissionais com conhecimentos sobre: a nova doença COVID-19, pacientes críticos e o uso das novas tecnologias como também proporcionar um local de trabalho adequado.

Descritores: Assistência de Enfermagem; Enfermagem; Pandemias; Infecções por Coronavirus; Unidade de Terapia Intensiva.



Introduction

SARS-CoV-2 is a virus that causes the disease (Coronavirus Disease 2019 or also known as COVID-19), which after the appearance of the first case in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China, generated a public health emergency globally, in 2020 in the month of June there were more than 6.4 million confirmed cases and 385 million deaths worldwide¹. The clinical signs of the disease involve fever, fatigue, dry cough, and symptoms such as gastrointestinal and breathing difficulties².

In Brazil, in mid-January 2020, the Emergency Operations Center (COE) in Public Health was activated for the preparation of studies and protocols on the disease, the new coronavirus (COVID-19) that was spreading around the world. The epidemiological surveillance of human infection by SARS CoV-2 will be built and consolidated by WHO, with references brought from countries with published scientific evidence³.

With the discovery since then, numerous patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 had a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SRAG) and required admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). In this way, the pandemic has become a challenging moment for all the World Health Systems, due to the great demand for beds in Intensive Care Units and health professionals such as nurses⁴.

In Brazil, social and health inequalities were elements for some regions in the country, due to the lack of beds in the Intensive Care Unit and human resources, to have mortality rates higher than the national average. In the Unified Health System, more than 72% of the regions had a smaller number of beds than recommended by the Health Agencies. Occurring overcrowding and overloading of Health Units. The spread of the virus in the country is directly related to the coverage of the health care network, as well as the medical assistance arsenal available in these regions⁵.

Research carried out in Intensive Care Units showed a mortality rate of patients with COVID-19 of 50% and more than 75% need invasive mechanical ventilation, with a time greater than two weeks, certifying the need for qualified nursing teams to act in these scenarios, where work overload and stress are excessive⁶.

The care provided to patients by the nursing staff in the intensive care unit requires knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as the management is different and challenging and requires consecutive scientific technical training for professional development, as the techniques performed bring challenges to the nurse and your team^{6,7}.

Faced with this moment of pandemic, nurses face relevant challenges regarding the care and quality of nursing care in the Intensive Care Units. Nurses from the countries of China and Italy showed through their experiences that the biggest obstacles in the care of individuals with the disease COVID-19 were within the scope of structuring trained and qualified teams, staff dimensioning, management of supplies, equipment, and care for the health of these professionals^{8,9}.

In this scenario of global pandemic, educational measures are essential, especially when dealing with an unknown disease. Preventive measures for individual and

collective protections for professionals are extremely relevant for the safety and protection of these professionals. Being on the front lines is challenging, causes feelings of fear, anxieties, and anguish for the loss of patients.

The above study aims to report the performance of nurses in the Adult Intensive Care Unit at this time of the new coronavirus pandemic.

Methodology

The present study is an experience report, of the descriptive type, with a qualitative approach. This type of research allows the dissemination of content through the experiences of the authors themselves, thus transmitting scientific knowledge¹⁰.

The study was based on the experience of professional nurses in the current state of a pandemic, constructed while acting as nurses in Adult Intensive Care Units (ICU) of public hospitals in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The sector of the chosen location is intended for patients diagnosed with COVID-19, delimited within the period from February to July of the year 2021.

Among all the experiences, the feelings and challenges faced by these professionals during this period of work were also described, highlighting how the pandemic affected the work routine and the mental health of nurses.

Experience Report

During the work, it was initially possible to perceive that continuing and permanent health education is essential for the quality of care provided in the care of patients with SARS-CoV-2, in view of a growing demand for qualified professionals to work in the ICUs.

Another factor of the experience is the maintenance, between the multidisciplinary teams, of a communication relationship, which is extremely relevant in view of the experienced scenario, as there was a large increase in the number of cases, which started in May 2021. exclusive units for these patients, offering training to professionals, such as on standardizing the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Therefore, the seriousness of these patients was perceived and how they lack a quantity of nursing professionals with all the qualified staff.

In the first months of operation, the patients arrived in the ICU intubated, entered the emergency room and when they presented clinical seriousness, they were transferred to the critically ill unit.

Communication with family members was carried out by a team created by the hospital's crisis offices. In this period, we are faced with the clinical severity of the patients, where with a longer hospital stay, they showed constant worsening in the systemic involvement by the disease and showing a very slow recovery. Therefore, we experience affliction and a feeling of uselessness in the face of this scenario with the care of individuals infected by the new coronavirus.

During this period, it is worth noting that the use of videoconferences was used for meetings, classes, lectures to train professionals with the aim of improving care practices.



Enabling the training of new professionals hired due to demand in the dimensioning of personnel. Many of these had no experience in intensive care. As a result of this high demand in health services, nurses undoubtedly have a primary role in fighting this pandemic.

Brazilian nursing faces many challenges. In this pandemic, relevant aspects such as low wages and inadequate working conditions, reduced staffing, are evident. care with disease prevention and the use of technologies.

Discussion

In Brazil, the pandemic shows structural adversities present in the Health System, such as a lack of investment in research in the system itself, a shortage of qualified professionals and the lack of articulation between the levels of health care¹¹. The care of critically ill patients is faced with an increasing lack of trained professional nurses who can work in intensive care units¹².

This pandemic scenario symbolizes in the 21st century health a great challenge until the present moment. COVID-19 has relevant repercussions in the National Health System, notably about the creation and maintenance of beds in intensive care, the purchase of mechanical ventilators, organization of services and research regarding the discovery of vaccines and therapeutics used in patients¹³.

The current scenario shows the functioning of overcrowded hospitals with reduced staffing, lack of supplies, overworked professionals, physically and mentally. In view of this, the need to provide assistance to the category that mediates the story, collaborating and executing in an endless way for the care of those who are sick¹³.

The work of the nursing teams obtained current paradigms, as in addition to assistance, they turned into a communication channel between patients and families, sharing the afflictions experienced together with the loss of their co-workers. The teams play an important role, as they manage and contribute to care, working to provide individuals with recovery and, as far as possible, providing tranquility to family members. Many professionals stayed away from their families as a form of prevention¹⁴.

The most common complications of COVID-19 disease presented in patients is the Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS), in addition to other disorders such as kidney injury, cardiac and alveolar lesions and secondary infections. Regarding nursing care for these clinical conditions, the use of renal replacement therapy (hemodialysis) and the use of the prone position has been one of the most applied procedures both in intensive care units and in clinical inpatient units and critically ill patients, with the intuition of reduced mortality and comfort for these patients with coronavirus¹⁵.

Most patients required pronation, in this maneuver, the nurse has an essential role in the application of clinical practice and in the management of the process and implementation of the technique. In Brazil, we have a vast literature on the applicability process through a checklist on the prone maneuver. The standardization of the technique is very important nowadays, it is worth remembering that the

maneuver has relevant problems such as pressure injuries caused by medical devices, pneumonia associated with mechanical ventilation and accidental extubation¹⁶.

The implications of the pandemic in the lives of nursing professionals in Brazil are still unknown. Therefore, studies carried out with nurses and nursing technicians and assistants from other countries, such as China, with diseases caused by viruses similar to SARS-CoV-2 had negative repercussions on the health of these individuals, evidencing infection by the virus, Burnout Syndrome; stress caused by pressure from organizations and society, ethical obstacles in carrying out the procedures, anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress; Excessive self-medication due to fatigue or mental illness: fear and insecurity in infecting their families. In addition to living with high numbers of deaths¹⁷.

Mental Health of Nursing Professionals in the Intensive Care Unit

Confirming the results about the feelings experienced by nurses, the research by Caldas¹⁸ shows that health professionals faced fear, constant worry, stress for the situation and developed mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression and insomnia related to them.

The work of the nursing team in assisting critically ill patients causes psychological distress. In the scenario we experience of social isolation, there is a lot of pressure on health services, boosting feelings of abandonment, displeasure, sadness, and organic repercussions such as sleep disturbance and appetite¹⁹.

The nurse's workload and technical commitment can contribute to the emotional imbalance of these professionals, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic corroborated this situation, which originated in drastic changes in work relations and social life and caused that these professionals would be more vulnerable to this torment¹⁸. Important factors such as lack of personal protective equipment, training, diagnostic tests, lack of adequate staffing, information and knowledge related to the new disease, increase in the number of infected nursing professionals and the devaluation of the entire category²⁰.

The nursing team is the psychological support, whose individual creates a bond in the period in which they need health care, however at this time of the pandemic this team cannot perform this activity properly due to the impact on their health emotional. The World Health Organization, Federal Council of Nursing and Regional Bodies, identifying this psychological need from health service workers, organized interventions, and psychological care for professionals²¹.

In addition, it is constantly faced with an accumulation of corrupted information arising from the media such as social media, which weakens the population's conduct in relation to responsibility for their own health²². On the other hand, in another research, it is possible to see another point of view about social networks, stating that they have the ability and facility to transmit information in real time to the entire population, that is, the media have negative points and positive and that it just depends on how it will be used and what sources are being read²³.



It is noticed then that nursing health professionals go through challenges in this period of pandemic because they experience shortage of human resources, work overload, lack of personal protective equipment and supplies in general, in view of all this, they still face the uncertainty of treatments performed and fear, apprehension of the coordination of their own health and that of their patients and families²⁴.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the pandemic scenario has a framework of great challenges for the entire population, highlighting the nursing team, in this case the nurse, as they

are directly related to the care actions of care practices, training, remodeling of work management.

However, the need to prepare professionals with knowledge about the new disease COVID-19, critically ill patients and the use of new technologies is notorious as well as providing an adequate workplace, but in addition, preparing nurses in the psychological aspect for your acting.

As a recommendation for future work, we mention the carrying out of studies aimed at all areas of health, making comparisons to see if there is a difference in the mental impact between the professions, that is, to understand the experiences of different areas and how they react to the state of current health against COVID-19.

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