

**Approach to stomatherapy content in undergraduate nursing courses: reflections from an extension project**

*Aproximación al contenido de estomaterapia en cursos de pregrado en enfermería:  
reflexiones a partir de un proyecto de extensión*

*Abordagem do conteúdo de estomaterapia nos cursos de graduação em enfermagem:  
reflexões a partir de um projeto de extensão*

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**Abstract**

This research aimed to reflect on the approach to the contents of Stomatherapy in undergraduate nursing courses. This is a reflection study that emerged from discussions held with the team of an Extension Project, linked to the Nursing course at a university in the State of Rio de Janeiro. With the growing number of people undergoing stomatherapy, as well as the emergence of equipment and technologies to treat these health problems, it is essential to include disciplines in undergraduate nursing curricula that allow students to expand their skills, preparing them for the care of these patients. Although graduation aims at training generalist nurses, it is of fundamental importance to have the minimum relevant content related to the area of stomatherapy, in order to enable future professionals to identify certain health problems, thus offering holistic care. and safe, because the need to acquire knowledge and develop specific skills that are required in professional practice is notorious.

**Descriptors:** Stomatherapy; Formation; Nursing; Nursing Education; Higher Education.

**Resumen**

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo reflexionar sobre el abordaje de los contenidos de Estomaterapia en los cursos de graduación en enfermería. Se trata de un estudio de reflexión que surgió de discusiones sostenidas con el equipo de un Proyecto de Extensión, vinculado a la carrera de Enfermería en una universidad del Estado de Río de Janeiro. Con el creciente número de personas que se someten a estomaterapia, así como con el surgimiento de equipos y tecnologías para el tratamiento de estos problemas de salud, es fundamental incluir disciplinas en los planes de estudios de pregrado en enfermería que permitan a los estudiantes ampliar sus habilidades, preparándolos para el cuidado de estos pacientes. Si bien la graduación tiene como objetivo la formación de enfermeros generalistas, es de fundamental importancia contar con los contenidos mínimos pertinentes relacionados con el área de estomaterapia, a fin de capacitar a los futuros profesionales para identificar ciertos problemas de salud, ofreciendo así un cuidado holístico y seguro, ya que la Es notoria la necesidad de adquirir conocimientos y desarrollar habilidades específicas que se requieren en el ejercicio profesional.

**Descriptores:** Estomaterapia; Formación; Enfermería; Educación en Enfermería; Educación Universitaria.

**Resumo**

A presente pesquisa objetivou refletir sobre a abordagem dos conteúdos de Estomaterapia nos cursos de graduação em enfermagem. Trata-se de um estudo de reflexão que emergiu a partir de discussões feitas junto à equipe de um Projeto de Extensão, vinculado ao curso de Enfermagem de uma universidade no Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Com o crescente número de pessoas em situação de estomaterapia bem como com o surgimento de equipamentos e tecnologias no tratamento desses problemas de saúde, faz-se imprescindível a inclusão nos currículos de graduação em enfermagem de disciplinas que possibilitem aos acadêmicos expandirem suas competências, preparando-os para a assistência desses pacientes. Apesar da graduação objetivar a formação de enfermeiros generalistas, é de fundamental importância que se tenha o mínimo relevante do conteúdo ligado à área da estomaterapia, a fim de possibilitar ao futuro profissional a identificação de determinados problemas de saúde, ofertando, assim, um cuidado holístico e seguro, isto porque é notória a necessidade da apreensão de conhecimentos e o desenvolvimento de habilidades específicas que são requeridas na prática profissional.

**Descritores:** Estomaterapia; Formação; Enfermagem; Educação em Enfermagem; Educação Superior.



## Introduction

During university education, nursing graduates are introduced to a range of different disciplines and content. It is understood that nurses need to have a comprehensive and differentiated training, which allows them to have a critical-reflective view of practice and training, since the object of work of this professional, which is care, should be the focus of throughout the process, to ensure the quality of care<sup>1</sup>.

The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) for Nursing Graduation point to a profile of a generalist, humanist, critical and reflective professional, in which the focus is on responsibility and commitment to citizenship, supported by ethical principles<sup>2</sup>.

In this perspective, the teaching and learning process needs to be dynamic and with significant interaction between the actors involved in the processes. Thus, the professor must guide and guide the critical formation of the students, enabling their active participation in the process and understanding that they have important previous experiences that will contribute to an excellent formation. It should be noted that in the context of nursing, the teaching and learning process performed in a critical way has the potential to train qualified, autonomous professionals capable of developing knowledge<sup>3,4</sup>.

The complexity of the nurse's work process makes it essential to develop specific skills and competences. Therefore, comprehensive and differentiated training should focus on a critical-reflective view of professional practice, thus ensuring the quality of care. Also, according to the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN), the purpose of Higher Education is to stimulate students' reflective thinking through the development of research, with the aim of training individuals capable of working in different professional areas, and to promote the desire for improvement and professional qualification<sup>5,6</sup>.

In this context, it is emphasized that a broad review of undergraduate nursing curricula should be carried out in view of the significant changes in the epidemiological profile that have been occurring in the Brazilian population. It is expected that the future professional will be qualified to act and intervene in health promotion, prevention, protection and rehabilitation actions, providing comprehensive care to individuals, families and communities in the face of the multiplicity of health-disease situations<sup>7</sup>.

In this way, it is important to strengthen the contents related to stomatherapy care during the Nursing Graduation Course, considering issues such as the increase in life expectancy, the change in the population profile, consequently with a growth of the elderly population and, therefore, the increase chronic non-transmissible diseases, thus increasing the number of people with stomas, wounds and incontinence<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, it is relevant to insert content related to the area of stomatherapy in nursing training, a specialty that is intended for the care of stomas, fistulas, probes and catheters, acute and chronic wounds and anal and urinary incontinence, in its aspects preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation measures, aiming at improving the quality of life<sup>9</sup>. It is a specialty that, as it is recent in the context of

health and even in nursing, there is incipient knowledge about it. And this incipience also permeates the undergraduate nursing curriculum<sup>10</sup>.

It is also noticed that undergraduate students have doubts and difficulties in providing effective and safe care to patients with wounds, stomas and incontinence. And this insecurity often generates distancing from the patient or providing care without proper safety and effectiveness.

It is noteworthy that the motivation for this study emerged in the meetings held by the Extension Project entitled "Integralizing teaching and care actions in the context of Stomal Therapy", linked to the Nursing course at a university in the State of Rio de Janeiro, as well as from the perceptions experienced through the teaching activities of both the coordinator of the aforementioned project and the project partner teachers, in undergraduate nursing courses, whether in theoretical classes or practical activities.

The contribution of this study is to highlight the need to expand the discussions focused on Stomatherapy during the nurse's training process, with repercussions for a safer and more effective nursing practice. In addition, it aims to contribute to the consolidation of the extension project as a strategy to strengthen technical-scientific knowledge in this area. Based on the above, the present study aims to reflect on the approach to the contents of Stomal Therapy in undergraduate nursing courses.

## Methodology

This is a reflective article with a qualitative approach of the descriptive type, in order to address the perspectives of discussions on the contents related to Stomal Therapy in undergraduate nursing education.

It is noteworthy that a search was carried out in the Virtual Health Library (VHL), in order to verify the publications related to stomatherapy and nursing training, which could support this proposal, including to point out that there are few studies on the subject. The search was carried out with the following descriptors: "Stomatherapy" and "Education in Nursing", combined using the Boolean operator "AND", in order to guarantee diversity in the search.

From this initial search, without using a temporal cut, 28 studies were found, but only 20 complete articles. And, of these, only 04 had a correlation between stomatherapy and undergraduate nursing education. This shows that there are some gaps on this subject, thus emphasizing the importance of this study. This reflection was developed based on two theoretical sections, which complement each other and enabled the deepening of discussions about the proposed theme.

Theoretical sections were titled as follows: i) The undergraduate nursing curriculum and approaches to themes related to Stomal Therapy; ii) Changes in patterns of health situations and the consequent need for discussions about Stomal Therapy in undergraduate nursing courses.

## Results and Discussion

**The undergraduate nursing curriculum and approaches to issues related to stomatherapy**



The Ministry of Education (MEC), through Ordinance No. 1,721, of December 15, 1994, proposed a new curriculum for the nursing course, exposing the profile of the generalist nurse, with a non-fragmented view of systems and specialties, with a holistic view, integrated and qualified to perform four fundamental areas: assistance, management, teaching and research. The curricular proposal made official through the aforementioned Ordinance was based on the assumption that education, once centered on the development of critical awareness, promotes social transformation and enables professionals to reflect on their professional practice and on their commitment to it. the society<sup>11,12</sup>.

With the implementation of the Unified Health System (SUS), the organization of care practices and management of the health system undergoes changes, as a result of the formulation and expansion of proposals for new care models, which ended up involving the diversification of health care services. health, the qualification of workers and the nature of work in health. Thus, innovative paradigms were needed to guide the training of professionals in the area<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, there is a need for reflection, discussion and explanation of the objective and subjective circumstances that are part of the health-disease process, also due to the speed of political and economic transformations that have been taking place in the contemporary world. Thus, the movement for curricular changes in health, especially in Nursing, created training structures that contemplate curricular interdisciplinarity as a strategy capable of handling the teaching of a complex object such as the health-disease process. Therefore, an attempt is made to address the broader issues of the sector, especially the principle of integrality<sup>14</sup>.

In nursing, more especially, there are the National Curriculum Guidelines for Graduation in Nursing (DCN/ENF), approved in 2001, whose basic premise is curricular flexibility, which enables a solid formation according to the stage of knowledge developed in each area, enabling the graduate to face the successive changes/transformations in the health area and their respective reflections in the world of work<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, the DCN/ENF triggered an intense movement to restructure curricula, seeking adaptation to new professional requirements. These guidelines led to a curricular reform of undergraduate nursing courses throughout Brazil; in such reform, the concern with solidarity, citizenship, knowing how to live together, learning to be and learning to live with the other became evident, elements that constitute the essence of humanism and ethics as the mainspring of human behavior<sup>11</sup>.

Therefore, it should be noted that stomatherapy is an expanding specialty and has grown in the national market because it operates in several areas, not only in care activities, but also in teaching, research, administration, sales, advisory and consulting<sup>16</sup>. And with the change in the epidemiological profile of the country, it is necessary to reflect on changes in undergraduate nursing curricula.

It is identified, many times, that the contents related to Stomatherapy are discussed in elective subjects and/or in specific moments within the formal curriculum. Even so, it appears that most of the discussions are about knowledge about skin lesions and very little is addressed about stomas and incontinence.

When the course is offered as an option, it is up to the nursing student, autonomously, to choose or not to take it. In general, these disciplines aim to provide a more personalized training in a given theme or subject<sup>16</sup>. With the growing number of people undergoing stomatherapy, as well as the emergence of equipment and technologies to treat these health problems, it is essential to include disciplines in undergraduate nursing curricula that allow students to expand their skills, preparing them for the care of these patients<sup>17</sup>.

It is noteworthy that discussions on this topic are observed in undergraduate courses, also involving involvement with extension activities, including the participation of students who are interested in the area, in Academic Leagues. These activities support the training of nurses, providing dialogic interaction between the academic environment and the community, generating the exchange of knowledge and multidisciplinary work, being organizations formed by student groups, which develop didactic, scientific, cultural and social activities with their members, with the guidance of one or more teachers<sup>18</sup>.

### **Changes in patterns of health situations and the consequent need for discussions about stomatherapy in undergraduate nursing courses**

The current labor market is marked by numerous requirements, such as professionals with a high level of qualification, with autonomy for decision-making, who are able to quickly incorporate technologies, and take responsibility for providing answers to the problems of the most different production processes.<sup>19</sup> In this way, professionals need to be prepared and able to adapt to the new trends imposed by the world of work.

In this context, it should be noted that there has been a change in the Brazilian epidemiological profile, with a significant increase in the number of people who require specific stomatherapy care, due to the increase in sick individuals or those with a high risk of illness, due to communicable and non-communicable diseases and due to external causes, highlighting urban and traffic violence and population aging, making stomatherapy care increasingly important. Thus, there is a significant number of individuals with acute and chronic wounds, caused by diabetes mellitus, systemic arterial hypertension, leprosy, vascular disease, cancer, among others<sup>20,21</sup>.

It is noteworthy that, in the case of cancer, especially, the issue is aggravated, as there has been an increase in cases of colorectal cancer in recent years, resulting in a significant increase in people with a stoma. These data even led the government to create specific laws to regulate care for people with a stoma, with a view to social inclusion, through nursing actions in stoma therapy, in addition to other multidisciplinary strategies<sup>22,23</sup>.



The ostomy, whether temporary or permanent, generates significant changes in the individual's life. Patients undergoing such a procedure have their perspective on life altered, especially due to the impairment of body image, due to the presence of a stoma associated with a collection bag, for example. In addition, there are changes in elimination patterns, eating and hygiene habits, nuisances such as the elimination of gases, leaks and the odor exhaled by the bag, resulting in emotional reactions such as denial, anger and depression, reduced self-esteem, compromised sexuality and, often, in social isolation<sup>24</sup>.

These negative feelings can be reinforced by the socioeconomic and cultural factors in which the individual is inserted. In this sense, the nurse has the potential to help and guide the patient and family to deal with this new life condition<sup>25</sup>.

In this perspective, the vision of nursing care refers to the idea of assisting the individual in a holistic and comprehensive way, that is, including biological, psychosocial and spiritual aspects, promoting adequate, quality and effective care<sup>26</sup>.

In this way, it is necessary to strengthen the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of nursing students, in order to have a clinical practice with excellence, being technically and scientifically prepared to care for people affected by problems related to the area of nursing stomatherapy.

Thus, nursing graduates in their training processes need to understand the dynamics of care in this area of knowledge in order to work more effectively in their jobs in the future, with the necessary technical-scientific knowledge, which gives greater scientificity to the practice, providing sustainability to the praxis that converts into professional autonomy and quality of care<sup>27</sup>.

This is also important to be able to offer quality of life to people undergoing stomatherapy, who sometimes end up unassisted, due to the lack of knowledge on the part of professionals regarding these more specific and even more complex care<sup>27</sup>.

In this way, it is of fundamental importance to master the contents related to stomatherapy, in order to effectively provide excellent care for this population. Thus, it

is essential to strengthen technical-scientific knowledge, developing skills and competences in nurses regarding the care of people undergoing stomatherapy, so that excellent care is effectively provided for this population.

## Conclusion

It is considered relevant to promote, in undergraduate nursing courses, the strengthening of content related to wounds, stomas and, especially with regard to the incontinence axis, which is a frequent problem in the elderly population and in women, resulting in serious biopsychosocial damage for this population, considering that there is a gap on these topics in most nursing curricula.

Although graduation aims at training generalist nurses, it is of fundamental importance to have the minimum relevant content related to the area of stomatherapy, in order to enable future professionals to identify certain health problems, thus offering holistic care. and safe, because the need to acquire knowledge and develop specific skills that are required in professional practice is notorious.

This study presents as a limitation the fact that a field survey was not carried out to survey the contents of stomatherapy that have been addressed in the scope of nursing graduation, in different regions of Brazil, for example. In this way, it is suggested that new studies can be carried out with this theme.

It is understood that these contents can even be taught in addition to lectures, using active methodologies to deepen the technical-scientific knowledge in the area of stomatherapy, such as, for example, the use of a teaching and skills laboratory, the conducting conversation circles, contributing to the apprehension of skills and competences for the development of nursing care in the context of stomatherapy, in a dynamic and realistic way.

In addition, the existence of extension projects, Leagues, elective disciplines and the holding of scientific events in the area aimed at undergraduate students can also help to strengthen scientific knowledge in the area of stomatherapy, subsidizing the formal disciplines that already exist, and opening paths for the inclusion of new disciplines that contemplate this content.

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