

**Nursing team's impressions about the COVID-19 pandemic***Impresiones del equipo de enfermería sobre la pandemia de COVID-19**Impressões da equipe de enfermagem acerca da pandemia da COVID-19***Marcia Pereira Gomes<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

The aim was to identify the impressions of nursing professionals about work in the pandemic of the new coronavirus and describe these impressions. Descriptive cross-sectional study developed from the qualitative approach. The Free and Informed Consent Term was prepared in clear, easy to understand language, providing information to the research participants, as well as guaranteeing anonymity and the refusal to participate in the study and the withdrawal from the study at any time, without any burden. for the study participant. Nurses are on the front lines and are the basis of any response activity. There is a fine line between dying and living, there is a set of factors in addition to the severity of living with the virus, prejudice, stigma, breaking social and emotional relationships are factors that make the subjects feel helpless and depressed, leading to a negative perspective of this new context experienced. For the study subjects, training and PPE bring protection and safety, but they need to be accompanied by technical training and knowledge, as well as safety, respect, and appreciation of nursing professionals.

**Descriptors:** COVID-19; Pandemic; Nursing; Nursing Care; Work Conditions.**Resumen**

El objetivo fue identificar las impresiones de los profesionales de enfermería sobre el trabajo en la pandemia del nuevo coronavirus y describir estas impresiones. Estudio descriptivo transversal desarrollado a partir del enfoque cualitativo. El Término de Consentimiento Libre e Informado fue elaborado en un lenguaje claro y fácil de entender, brindando información a los participantes de la investigación, además de garantizar el anonimato y la negativa a participar en el estudio y el retiro del estudio en cualquier momento, sin ningún tipo de carga. para el participante del estudio. Las enfermeras están en primera línea y son la base de cualquier actividad de respuesta. Existe una delgada línea entre morir y vivir, existe un conjunto de factores además de la severidad de vivir con el virus, el prejuicio, el estigma, la ruptura de relaciones sociales y emocionales son factores que hacen que los sujetos se sientan indefensos y deprimidos. una perspectiva negativa de este nuevo contexto experimentado. Para los sujetos de estudio, la formación y los EPI aportan protección y seguridad, pero deben ir acompañados de formación y conocimientos técnicos, así como seguridad, respeto y valoración de los profesionales de enfermería.

**Descriptorios:** COVID-19; Pandemia; Enfermería; Cuidado de Enfermería; Condiciones de Trabajo.**Resumo**

Objetivou-se identificar as impressões dos profissionais de enfermagem a cerca do trabalho na pandemia do novo coronavírus e descrever essas impressões. Estudo tipo transversal descritivo desenvolvido a partir da abordagem qualitativa. O Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido foi elaborado em linguagem clara, de fácil compreensão, fornecendo informações aos participantes da pesquisa, bem como a garantia do anonimato e a recusa de participação no estudo e o desligamento do estudo a qualquer momento, sem que haja ônus para o participante do estudo. Os enfermeiros estão na linha de frente e são a base de qualquer atividade de resposta. Há uma linha tênue entre morrer e viver, existe um conjunto de fatores para além da gravidade do convívio com o vírus, o preconceito, o estigma, a quebra das relações sociais e afetivas são fatores que fazem com que os sujeitos se sintam desamparados e deprimidos, levando a uma perspectiva negativa deste novo contexto vivenciado. Para os sujeitos do estudo, o treinamento e EPIs trazem proteção e segurança, mas precisam estar acompanhados de formação técnica e conhecimento, bem como segurança, respeito e valorização dos profissionais de enfermagem.

**Descritores:** COVID-19; Pandemia; Enfermagem; Cuidado de Enfermagem; Condições de Trabalho.

## Introduction

Brazil faces a pandemic of the disease of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), name given to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARG) caused by the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) which is one of the seven subtypes of coronavirus that cause diseases in humans. The first case in the country was diagnosed on February 26 in São Paulo, and it is also the first case in Latin America<sup>1,2</sup>.

It appeared in China in December 2019, where it had numerous hospitalizations for pneumonia, initially without an isolated etiologic agent, which evolved with severe respiratory complications<sup>3</sup>.

Since then, it is a disease, still with many uncertainties, without specific treatment or vaccine, and that each day new evidence emerges, new forms of protection to reduce the contagion and, consequently, the number of deaths.

Nursing professionals, due to the characteristics of the profession, stay longer with patients, consisting of the "front line" in the fight against this disease. In the front line of care for this new syndrome, there is nursing that, due to the characteristic of its assistance and care work, is closer to the patient during the 24 hours, and particularly the health professionals who provide assistance to these patients are more vulnerable. They are professionals who are at the forefront in the care provided, regardless of the type of care and the health situation, pandemic or not<sup>4-7</sup>.

Given this global scenario and within the context of the Brazilian reality, do nursing professionals feel prepared to act in the current pandemic of the new coronavirus? Thus, the study proposes as objectives to identify the impressions of nursing professionals about the work in the pandemic of the new coronavirus and describe these impressions.

## Methodology

This is a descriptive cross-sectional study developed from the qualitative approach. The target population of this study was made up of nursing professionals from hospital and / or outpatient clinics of both sexes, aged over 18 years. Exclusion criteria were considered: non-assisting nursing professionals, nursing students as well as those who did not wish to participate in the research.

The study sample was non-probabilistic for convenience, where nursing professionals working in the State of Rio de Janeiro were sought in various health institutions in May 2020. Thus, this study was carried out with 128 participants. The search for study participants took place randomly through online social networks such as Facebook and Instagram as well as through the WhatsApp mobile application.

The data collection instrument was made available to subjects through Google Forms (Google's online form, stored on Google Cloud). The online form was composed of 13 questions divided into two distinct parts: the first part was composed of five questions to characterize the subjects and the second part with questions focusing on the assistance activities developed during the pandemic by

The self-applied online data collection technique was chosen, in view of the social restriction measures imposed by the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro through Decree No. 46,970, of March 13, 20208. Each professional, by accepting to participate in the research, he agreed to the Free and Informed Consent Form (ICF).

Data analysis was performed through Bardin's content analysis, seeking to describe the content emitted in the communication process<sup>9</sup>. The study followed the ethical recommendations issued by Resolution 466 of 2012 of the National Health Council. The research was approved under the number of Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation (CAAE) of Plataforma Brasil: 30585220.8.0000.0008 and according to opinion no. 4,032,158. The subjects were identified by the letter P followed by the interview number.

## Results

In the interview guide, open questions were elaborated, namely: "Do you think that Brazilian nursing is prepared to work with the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, say in your point of view which characteristics make nursing ready to work in this pandemic. If not, say, in your point of view, what is necessary for Brazilian nursing to be ready to work with the COVID-19 pandemic.", "Do you have any observations to make about nursing as the front line in the fight to COVID-19?"

To infer the relevant meanings and to respond to the objectives, three categories were elaborated, namely: Training and PPE: protection and safety; Technical training: scientific knowledge boosting service; Safety, respect and appreciation: urgent needs for nursing.

### Training and PPE: protection and safety

When asked the professionals what would be necessary for Brazilian nursing to be ready to work with the COVID-19 pandemic, the group was unanimous in highlighting the need for training (in general in relation to the disease, as well as the use of new service protocols and adequate use of PPE), as well as PPE in sufficient quality and quantity.

*"More staff training, provision of suitable PPE" (P10).*

*"Training and use of PPE" (P17).*

*"We are vulnerable, everything is new. Many doubts and questions. Training, but with PPE care, the disease is still a mystery, in every way" (P24).*

*"There should be concise training, and adequate personal protective equipment and in adequate quantity" (P61).*

*"Training on new protocols (intubation, use of PPE), psychological care (fear of dying and fear of contaminating the family)" (P62).*



*"In addition to training, it is necessary to provide adequate PPE to guarantee the safety of these professionals" (P67).*

*"Supply of PPE to cope with COVID-19" (P71).*

*"Proper use of PPE. Training on proper care for this patient" (P73).*

*"Lack of PPE and training" (P90).*

In addition to highlighting the importance of training and PPE as fundamental, some professionals also pointed out the need for security, general inputs, reading materials for scientific support, support and appreciation by managers and society, infrastructure in places of work, enough professionals and emotional support.

### Technical training: scientific knowledge driving service

When asked about the characteristics that made nursing ready to work in this pandemic, we obtained the following results:

*"Professionals working with scientific basis" (P7).*

*"Your scientific technical knowledge" (P8).*

*"Technical-scientific knowledge and the fact that it is the largest workforce within the hospital" (P11).*

*"Knowledge is required to act. I believe that nursing is prepared because we are a profession that is very attuned to precautionary measures" (P21).*

*"Responsibility, scientific knowledge" (P51).*

*"Knowledge, perseverance, responsibility and a lot of Faith" (P52).*

*"In part if you follow the infection prevention guidelines. And have technical-scientific knowledge" (P97).*

*"Willingness to care" (P81).*

*"Willingness and responsibility for assistance" (P84).*

In addition to technical-scientific knowledge, which was the biggest highlight to support this preparation of the nursing team to attend the cases of COVID-19, some interviewees pointed out the determination, willpower, responsibility, and ethics in care, as well as elements that represent faith, resilience, empathy, and solidarity.

### Safety, respect and appreciation: urgent needs for nursing

At a last moment, it was requested that some observation be made about nursing as the front line in the fight against COVID-19, if so desired, and the following statements were obtained:

*"We are not respected, and we just work" (P5).*

*"Excessive workload and insufficient number of professionals make adequate nursing care unfeasible" (P31).*

*"Nursing needs to be respected, valued, and not what the government is doing" (P38).*

*"It is necessary to value the professional, rethink the team sizing and seek to work scales so that professionals can maintain their mental health in conditions to continue working" (P39).*

*"We are essential, and, for this reason, we have to be valued, because we face the problem head on, we are the ones who spend most of the time exposed in all procedures" (P45).*

*"It needs to be more valued, including with regard to compensation" (P48).*

*"We should undoubtedly be valued because health is not done without nursing" (P54).*

*"We need recognition, financial incentive, equipment (PPE and other materials) and physical structure to motivate and guarantee optimal patient care" (P59).*

*"We deserve to be better valued. Respecting our physical and emotional limits in the face of this pandemic, as well as the salary issue of our category" (P94).*

### Discussion

Training and PPE were needs that were present at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but that need to be maintained to meet the dynamics of the disease. Health professionals who care for COVID-19 patients need access to rooms in protective suits for the entire body (including full-body cloak, glasses or face shield, surgical mask or N95 mask (depending on the type of procedure), gloves, sneakers, and other components) that have been labeled "Level D". Most health professionals have no experience with level D PPE, this situation can lead to a state of crisis, making it difficult, from a technical and emotional point of view, to care<sup>10</sup>.

Situations in environments crowded with patients, where the risk of viral transmissibility increases, the death present in many situations, requires nursing care with caution and precision, not only in specific technical procedures, but also in the suitability and lack of proper PPE and, for this, it is necessary that in-service training takes place for its correct use. Training according to national and international protocols can contribute to reducing the risk of infection in health professionals<sup>7</sup>.

For most respondents, having PPE and training brings a sense of security and makes professionals feel protected for work. Lack of support, communication and training are risk factors that increase the possibility of developing psychological illnesses<sup>3</sup>.

COVID-19 still has many gaps and questions to be answered, little is known, and much is speculated. The rate of dissemination is amazingly fast and there is no specific



treatment. To date, experts report that there are no proven effective and safe pharmacological interventions that can generate a protocol for routine use in the treatment of COVID-19<sup>11</sup>.

Dissemination of information is an important strategy in this pandemic scenario, since the context of COVID-19 is always dynamic and changes, effective communication is necessary so that professionals can be updated on control and prevention measures, providing nursing care quality, as well as safety for the public and nursing professionals. We highlight information from true sources, with transparency, clarity, and responsibility as the most important tool in this situation<sup>3</sup>.

Care is the essence of Nursing, being guided by ethics, respect and responsibility and in order to have quality care, technical and scientific knowledge and autonomy are necessary, however, in a pandemic situation, physical and mental exhaustion is common, making conflicting to act ethically and responsibly in the midst of work overload<sup>4,7,12</sup>.

Having security, whether in the use of appropriate PPE, as well as with your employment relationship, appreciation of your work and respect are fundamental factors for nursing, especially currently. However, working conditions include long hours, intense pace and professional devaluation<sup>7</sup>.

Historically without prestige, without visibility and disregarded by a good part of society, the nursing team has become a protagonist in the current pandemic<sup>4,13</sup>.

In the absence of treatments or vaccines, it is the nursing care that guarantees the dignity, quality, and safety of care for those who need hospitalization by COVID-19. As one interviewee well pointed out, it is necessary a decent salary, respect, and appreciation, as it is not a charity work, corroborating what Elda Bussinger<sup>13</sup> brings in his article when he says that the nursing professional has been mitigated for decades in his fundamental rights to decent work and fair wages. And he concludes by stating that appreciation is manifested in fair wages and adequate and dignified working conditions.

The working conditions of nursing professionals, in most cases, are precarious, leading these professionals to feelings of insecurity and low quality of personal and

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Gomes MP, Barbosa DJ, Souza FBA, Gomes AMT, Paula GS, Espírito Santo CC professional life, which, consequently, leads to negative repercussions on health, either in physical or mental form, and these can contribute to increased stress at work. Unhealthy conditions in the environment, work overload, low wages and inflexible shifts wear down the professional on the physical and psychological levels and compromise their social and work relationships<sup>3,12</sup>.

## Final Considerations

To date, there is no specific drug for the treatment of human infection with the new coronavirus. What is needed are supportive and general hygiene and prevention measures, such as hand washing, use of gel alcohol, masks, and social distance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a load of situations in which communication can greatly help professionals to better care for patients, family members and the professionals themselves. Having a trained and well-informed team about the virus, its transmission, techniques, and infection control processes will have a positive impact on relieving anxiety and fear in the context of this disease.

Nurses are on the front lines and are the basis of any response activity. There is a fine line between dying and living. There is a set of factors in addition to the severity of living with the virus, prejudice, stigma, the breakdown of social and emotional relationships are factors that make the subjects feel helpless and depressed, leading to a negative perspective of this new context experienced.

When responding to the objective of the study, it was identified that, for the subjects, training and PPE bring protection and security, but they need to be accompanied by technical training and knowledge, as well as safety, respect, and appreciation of nursing professionals.

Considering how important infection with the new coronavirus is nowadays, affecting society, how much this phenomenon persists surrounded by many uncertainties, it should be noted that this article does not intend to give fineness to the theme, but to encourage reflections, and further research, therefore, it is expected that this study will contribute to the development of new research in this area.

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