

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE FOR NURSING PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

A qualitative and descriptive study, whose purpose is self-care and the implications for the health of nursing workers in the intensive care context. Objectives: identifying the perception of nursing staff about self-care; describing the actions that workers perform on care of themselves; and discussing the implications of self-care for the health of these workers. Study participants were ten intensive care nursing professionals at a university hospital. The collection was a semi-structured interview and to processing data was used the technique of thematic content analysis. From the analysis revealed three categories related: the meaning of self-care; attitudes, behaviors and proposals about the subject and; the influences of self-care to work and workers' health. It was found that self-care is important for the health of these professionals and the work process, because the actions taken to maintain this care improve the quality of personal and professional life. In addition, it was observed that self-care is promoter of physical and mental health of nursing staff.

Keywords: Occupational health. Nursing. Intensive care.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing professionals dedicate to the well-being of people in situations of vulnerability or not; however, with certain frequency, these professionals neglect the care of their own health. However, it is known that self-care is essential to the physical, mental and spiritual balance of the worker as well as factor that may qualify the care for others⁽¹⁾. Supporting this assertive, stood out as the object of this study: self-care and the repercussions for the health of nursing workers at intensive care.

We decided to investigate the intensive care of nursing professionals because they face several challenges and stressful situations, such as: stressful routines, lack of human resources, high volume of activities, labor intensive work rhythm, sophisticated and noisy equipment, living with constant pain and death. All these reasons have great potential to causing damage to health, and can be evidenced in these professionals through the change of mood, the

presence of headache and anxiety, high incidence of musculoskeletal diseases and gastric ulcers, insomnia and involvement of behavior change, in addition to merging and attention deficits⁽²⁾.

Whereas such adverse context and enhancer of illness and negative manifestations on workers' health, self-care becomes a practice relevant to the maintenance of the well-being of professional collective, as well as contributing to the quality of care provided.

Self-care is understood as a process of subjectivities in which is involved in a variety of situations and actions that help to workers in range of biopsychosocial well-being. However, it becomes important to recognizing oneself more and allow greater involvement in its own care, understanding self-care is a healthy attitude and responsibility required for the process of life and promoting the health of all⁽¹⁾.

In this sense, deepen the reflections about the importance of self-care and its repercussions on workers' health assists in search for better working conditions and helps reflecting and

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implementing changes in the design of professional collective about the promotion of health and prevention of diseases.

According to the initial notes about the object, the following objectives have been defined: I) identifying the perception of employees about the nursing care of themselves; II) describing the actions that the workers are to take care of themselves; and III) discussing the repercussions of self-care for the health of these workers.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study with a qualitative approach, performed in intensive therapy of a university hospital located in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, characterized for presenting tertiary care level.

Ten nursing professionals participated in this study, among them: three nurses, two residents of nursing and five nursing technicians. The amount of participants served criterion of recurrence of information⁽³⁾, namely, when the contents of the collected material began to repeat, was a call for completion of the collection.

Bleeding cool is as selection criteria of the participants of the study: I) being intensive care nursing professional; II) workers on full exercise of the function for at least one year; and III) professionals who, after removal from work, returned its activities with more than six months.

The data were collected in the months of September and November 2013. For data capture it was used the collection technique and the semi-structured interview, whose instrument was composed of questions related to the meaning of self-care in workers' perspective, the actions implemented to promoting and maintaining self-care as well as the repercussions of the same on the health of nursing professionals.

The participants were told about the theme and objectives of the study, being invited to participate voluntarily and to sign an informed consent. Anonymity was assured by means of a code composed of letters and numbers, which the letter "and" referred to the word "Interview" and the numbering followed the order in which they were transcribed.

The interviews were held in place holder upon recording lines of the participants, being transcribed and analyzed at the order of its realization. Subsequently, the results were sorted and analyzed in accordance with the technique of content analysis⁽⁴⁾, being still, organized on the basis of the analysis of thematic content protection⁽⁵⁾.

The project has met all established ethical standards for research involving human beings, being approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, under the number 407.899/2013.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The age group most incident was between 41 and 50 years old, which amounts to 60% of participants. It was obtained a female preponderance, with 90 percent of women who responded to interview. About 70% of labor characteristics surveyed had more than one employment.

From the analysis there were identified 291 Records Units (RU), allocated in 56 Units of Meaning (US) and distributed in three categories: I) the meaning of care of themselves from the perspective of nursing worker; II) attitudes, behaviors and proposals that permeate the care of themselves; and III) influence the care of themselves for the work process and to the health of workers.

Category 1: The meaning of self-care from the perspective of nursing worker.

This category discusses the nursing workers' perception regarding self-care and the influence of the work environment, in this practice. On this point, workers spoke that the configuration of the workplace has great relevance for the development of self-care, as evidenced in the following statement:

Self-care encompasses several aspects, one of them is the emotional field that happens in the workplace and, much more, but also depends on the desktop (cozy, free from physical and emotional factors of order stressor, balanced power relations, other) [...] (E04).

In this context, the worker sought evidence that self-care depends on the context that surrounds it, highlighting the workplace itself as

part of that care. Soon the work scenario must configure how receptive the event of practices that provide self-care, in which there is harmony among team members, an environment of cooperation, solidarity and positive recognition among peers.

It is known that self-care is understood as that which has a complex web of meanings and relations, involving the self-knowledge, the attention to his own health, attention to the environment in which they live, in which are included aspects of interpersonal relationships, cross without tensions, conflicts and large competitiveness⁽⁶⁾.

It is expected that the organization of work to configure so that stimulate or provide conditions for self-care. Its characteristics must allow the manifestation of worker's subjectivity; promote dialogue between the professional collective, encouraging positive relationships between bosses and led, as well as among peers. It should also highlight the importance of healthy daily practices such as moments of pause in the work and activities of relaxation, but also help ensuring the well-being of the worker, configuring self-care measures⁽⁷⁾.

Another issue that emerged from the analysis of content was the concern with the various factors involving the worker for the maintenance of physical and mental health. The following testimonials confirm this statement:

Self-care would make everything my body is [...] signaling [...]. Be sensitive to changes in my body. Pay attention to what is happening in my body (E08).

We need to take care of health, periodic tests, and all preventive examinations, be in place healthy, talking to positive people, have quality of life, avoid stress [...]. The care of themselves, to me, means being right in question not only physics, but on the issue of prevention of diseases and that's important, psychologically. Sound fine to live life (E02).

In the perception of the participants, self-care involves a multiplicity of factors with a focus on health promotion, drawing also on prevention of diseases as a relevant instrument for the implementation of this practice. We emphasize that health was understood from the scope that goes beyond the purely physical issue of manifestation of symptoms; this involves the

psychosocial and physical well-being dimension to achieve a good quality of life.

It is understood that the issue of self-care is closely tied to the concept of having health, but not to health as the absence of symptoms. Health was highlighted in a broader conception, in a thorough and comprehensive perspective that involves an articulation with the various health determinants, such as the social, physical and mental factors⁽⁸⁾.

Considering the perception that self-care involves keeping good health condition, some participants stressed the importance of promoting the subjectivity of individuals, in order to have mental health, avoiding the illness.

[the meaning self-care] is the person looking for the best way to deal with the stresses of life [...]In life, there will be stress factors, so the way to deal with this will help avoid disease, for example. (E04).

General care, mostly. Is pay attention to mental health, so that we don't expose ourselves, and don't have problems with our health (E07).

The early reports are evidence of the importance of the subjective dimension of self-care from health promotion and prevention of diseases. In this way, participants highlighted that it is important to avoid the psychic suffering and stress in relation to broader issues of life, as well as those related to work environment. It should be noted that the latter may influence the satisfaction and well-being of professionals, mainly with regard to working conditions, physical environment and patterns of work shift⁽⁹⁾. Therefore, for the participants, self-care involves dealing with the stresses of everyday life, but also the working environment of intensive care, creating strategies to avoid the "stress".

Another important issue to consider relates to the work of nursing, also multifaceted and complex, in which take care of human life, often in situations of vulnerability. In addition, we highlight the need for versatility of the employee on the current configuration of the health work, characterized by precariousness and fragmentation. In this context, the worker needs to redefine its meaning concepts and attitudes to produce a work force able to act according to the requirements, aims and difficulties of the profession⁽¹⁰⁾.

In the analysis of the results of the interviews, emerged the relevance of interpersonal relations focused on family and professional relationship. This issue was eluded as an important component in the context of promoting self-care. The following statements exemplify this analysis:

[...] For me self-care involves a good family and professional relationship, goes through there too. (E05).

[...] I think I have a good relationship with the family and with co-workers is an important thing self-care [...] (E07).

From the interviews, it was noted the importance of the family and professional support networks to promote the care of themselves. Soon, it appears that a good interpersonal relationship, especially on family and professional area⁽⁹⁾, configures itself as an indispensable element in the effectiveness of that care.

Human relations are regarded as primordial principle for understanding self-care, since it permeates the process of mutual relationship between individuals, valuing this way, an interpersonal exchange that helps protect the subjectivity and, in turn, the health⁽⁶⁾.

Category 2: attitudes, behaviors and proposals that permeate self-care.

This category has as a basis for thematic discussion related to the practices, procedures and conduct adopted by the participants in order to making self-care. An activity much emphasized by the deponents is related to the practice of physical exercises, highlighted as primary factor for the realization of self-care, because the understanding of the participants, this approach favors the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, but also can be a strategy for stress relief, thus ensuring the maintenance of mental health, besides enabling the social conviviality. Below are the speeches that exemplify the above:

Physical activity is a component that interferes too much in the care you have with you, because I understand that as a thing that we have to do and there's no escape, not only to lose weight and stay fit, but to unwind (E6).

Practicing physical activity, I think, is part of taking care of ourselves, it is essential that we

have to take care of our body not to get sick, for example, cardiovascular disease [...] (E3).

Through this perspective, it appears that the practice of physical exercises helps in relaxation and replenishment of energies, thus avoiding the stress generated in everyday life in general and at work. According to these workers, this practice goes beyond an aesthetic issue, being significant for the prevention of illness in both the physical and mental sphere.

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement, in which happens energy expenditure through the movement of the skeletal musculature, which can be exemplified by fights, dances, gymnastics located, and bodybuilding, among others. This activity is related to health as a prevention of risk for illness, acting also as a positive factor for the maintenance of mental health⁽¹¹⁾.

Physical activity has as its main objective the maintenance of muscle tone, weight loss and/or preservation of ideal weight, cardiovascular system protection by means of ensuring that veins, arteries and muscles remain healthy. Thereby, it is known that the practice of physical exercise contributes in preventing diseases and obesity, in addition to being a protection factor against depression and other mental illnesses⁽¹¹⁾.

It also emerged from the analysis questions regarding the practice of healthy eating, understood as an act essential to the accomplishment of self-care. The following reports, characterize such analysis.

I understand that taking care of myself is I worry about feeding, trying to feed at the times correct and with the correct foods to be able to work well and live well [...] (E6).

So is balancing eating, drinking plenty of water in order to have a healthy life and healthy, do more or less [...] (E9).

The participants showed that healthy habits of life how to feed themselves adequately meets the needs of the body and maintains health in balance, being more a strategy used to maintain self-care.

The adoption of a healthy and balanced diet is a fundamental part of health promotion and disease prevention, making it relevant to the increase of quality of life. Yes, as well as the practice of physical exercise, healthy eating

comes back up with obesity, prevention of hypercholesterolemia, cancer, type 2 diabetes, acute myocardial infarction, among other diseases⁽¹²⁾.

Still in the context of the practices employed by participants to maintain self-care, discusses the necessity of carrying out leisure activities characterized by a series of entertainments as: parties, theater, dances, movies, television, books, among others. The following speeches confirm the above:

I'm a party girl, so dancing is everything in the life of the human being, smile a lot, I am always laughing and having a great time, and that's how I take care of myself, because after working, we need to distract [...] (E4).

Taking care of myself practicing my leisure, at home I distract me watching TV, watching a movie, reading a book, sometimes I go to the theater or the show, thus relief the stress of daily life (E6).

Leisure helps relieving the tension generated by the work, mainly in the intensive care setting, where workers live daily with suffering, serious illness and death, triggering an emotional overload, with feelings of anxiety, stress, and depressive syndromes, among others⁽¹³⁾.

The implementation of this practice occurs as a repairman of the deterioration of physical and mental forces, caused by the tensions arising from everyday obligations and, particularly, of the work. In this way, the pleasure can be understood as part of health promotion, and has three main functions, namely: the rest of fun (diversion, recreation and entertainment) and personality development⁽¹⁴⁾.

The activities carried out by nursing professionals for taking care of themselves act as promoters of well-being and ensure health. Given this fact, glimpse-if workers better prepared to face the uncertainties and tension of the workplace and therefore with greater possibilities of offering a quality and secure assistance.

Category 3: influence of self-care for the work process and to the health of workers.

This category has examined the repercussions of the practice of self-care in the dynamics of labor intensive therapy investigated. Participants spoke about how the adoption of this practice can improve the assistance provided and how

can also ensure the health professional collective. However through the analysis of the testimony, was also apprehended that the non-adoption of this practice on the part of workers may be a factor of injury to health and, consequently, to the result of the work undertaken.

When approached about this issue, participants mentioned that taking care of them influences the effectiveness of the work process, once to look after the other is paramount for taking care of them. The following speeches are evidence of the above:

When the professional go to bed take care of a patient he has to be careful too with it [...] (E3).

Care influences positively, so I guess this reflects directly on the issue of being good about yourself in every way and this reflects directly on the watch the other [...] (E2).

An essential task in any labor activity is that the worker is satisfied and healthy to perform its task. This possibility reflects the desire and motivation to develop a quality work⁽⁷⁾. Soon, self-care becomes a relevant tool for the maintenance of the quality of life of these workers; In addition to enhancing the quality of care offered.

However, it is known that the worker's health and its implications for the quality of work performed is a multifaceted, complex and intricate field, in which various knowledge and disciplines come together to ensure health and productivity⁽¹⁵⁾.

In this way, in a dialectical perspective, participants revealed that the carelessness of self can lead to biopsychic suffering for the caregiver. The testimonials confirm this account:

Echoes very {repercussions on health care professionals'}, because if you're not right you get your entire bad mood for work. And the nurse even if he is at the bureaucratic, administrative, he's taking care of lives, so if he's grumpy, unhappy, full of pain in the body, it comes with a very heavy load, pass it to the patients and the quality's not assistance, is not secure. So it is important that the professional look. (E9).

I think if you don't take care of yourself, you will never be able to exercise their activities well made during the day-to-day, not as [...]. But we know that if care is difficult due to the nature of our

work, which is difficult and because of the characteristics of current life (E1).

In the perception of the participants, the evils arising from the absence of care of them entail losses not only to the worker, but also in the context of work. Reports claim that the carelessness of themselves affects the satisfactory implementation of activities, which can result in inefficiency of the productive process and in the occurrence of psychobiological disorders. Some repercussions for the health workers disease process can be listed: stress, demotivation, moodiness, body aches, musculoskeletal disorders, irritability, altered menstrual flow, insomnia, attention deficit and concentration, duodenal and gastric ulcers, fatigue, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, low immunity, among others⁽¹¹⁾.

So, it infers that self-care is a primary factor for the provision of care to another, as when the care of themselves doesn't happen on the part of professionals, this can result in negative effects to watch out for each other; and may result in physical, psychological suffering, injury to health and, in turn, the quality of care provided⁽¹⁶⁾.

Thus, the participants emphasized the influence of self-care for the health of workers:

The care of themselves reflects positively on worker's health, because there you have less fueled, has greater concentration at work, you're not going to be unable to develop their activities [...] (E10).

Self-care reflects on provision if there on a day-to-day basis, attention also, you become more observant, if more to donate have a good relationship, both familiar, as with its co-worker [...] (E5).

In view of the foregoing, it appears that the implementation of self-care reflects positively on the subjective dimensions of workers, thus reducing the risk of illness and, consequently increasing productivity in the workplace, as well as encouraging the satisfactory implementation of the remaining activities extra-laboral.

When implementing care practice, the nursing professional should take care of itself in context with the same personal and professional responsibility to someone who takes care of the other, its actions should promote the quality of life of this binomial, caregiver/care, where the recognition of own limits and fragility by the nursing professional promotes the full exercise of the profession⁽¹⁷⁾.

FINAL NOTES

This study enabled the reflection about self-care, in the view of nursing workers of intensive therapy. In this respect, it was found that participants allude on pipelines, measures and procedures related to self-care.

It was considered important to highlight that self-care was appointed as a positive factor to the interpersonal relationships, in particular for nursing professionals who deal with a large and varied team of professionals; this way if they are not in positive connection with the workplace may have difficulty having a good interpersonal relationship. Another relevant subject captured was the carelessness of oneself can generate harms to physical and mental health of nursing professionals, leading to estrangement from work, in addition to having potential to harm the quality of care.

By means of the results obtained, we infer that self-care reflects positively on the biopsychic and social context of the employee, since this practice encourages the promotion and maintenance of health. In this way include leisure, physical activity, healthy diet, good interpersonal skills and a working performance that enable you caring with practices that favor worker's health.

However, the effects of inherent thematic studies require the development of new research, for greater deepening and discussions about the context of occupational health nursing and self-care.

A RELEVÂNCIA DO CUIDADO DE SI PARA PROFISSIONAIS DE ENFERMAGEM

RESUMO

Pesquisa qualitativa e descritiva, cujo objeto é o cuidado de si e as repercussões para a saúde dos trabalhadores de enfermagem que atuam no contexto intensivista. Objetivos: identificar a percepção dos trabalhadores de enfermagem sobre o cuidado de si; descrever as ações que os trabalhadores realizam para cuidarem de si; e

discutir as repercussões do cuidado de si para a saúde destes trabalhadores. Participaram do estudo dez trabalhadores de enfermagem de terapia intensiva de um hospital universitário. O instrumento de coleta foi a entrevista semiestruturada e para tratamento dos dados utilizou-se a técnica de análise temática de conteúdo. A partir da análise, emergiram três categorias relacionadas: ao significado do cuidado de si; às atitudes, comportamentos e propostas sobre a temática e; às influências do cuidado de si para o trabalho e a saúde do trabalhador. Verificou-se que o cuidado de si é relevante para a saúde destes profissionais e para o processo de trabalho, pois as ações desenvolvidas para a manutenção desse cuidado melhoram a qualidade de vida pessoal e profissional. Além disso, evidenciou-se que o cuidado de si é promotor da saúde física e mental dos trabalhadores de enfermagem.

Palavras-chave: Saúde do trabalhador. Enfermagem. Terapia intensiva.

LA IMPORTANCIA DEL CUIDADO DE SÍ MISMOS PARA LOS PROFESIONALES DE ENFERMERÍA

RESUMEN

Investigación cualitativa y descriptiva, cuyo objeto es el cuidado de sí mismos y las repercusiones para la salud de los trabajadores de enfermería que actúan en el contexto intensivista. Objetivos: identificar la percepción de los trabajadores de enfermería sobre el oficio cuidado de sí mismos; describir las acciones que los trabajadores realizan para cuidar de sí; y discutir las repercusiones del cuidado de sí mismos para la salud de estos trabajadores. Participaron en este estudio diez trabajadores de enfermería de cuidados intensivos de un hospital universitario. El instrumento de la colección fue la entrevista semi-estructurada y para el tratamiento de los datos se utilizó la técnica de análisis de contenido temático. Desde el análisis surgieron tres categorías relacionadas: el significado del cuidado de sí mismos; las actitudes, conductas y propuestas sobre el tema; y las influencias del cuidado de sí mismos al trabajo y la salud de los trabajadores. Se encontró que el cuidado de sí mismos es relevante para la salud de estos profesionales y para el proceso de trabajo, porque las acciones desarrolladas para el mantenimiento de la atención mejora la calidad de vida personal y profesional. Además, se evidenció que el cuidado de sí mismos es promotor de la salud física y mental de los trabajadores de enfermería.

Palabras clave: Salud laboral. Enfermería. Cuidados intensivos.

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