

Paternal role during the baby's first year of life: integrative review

RESUMO | Objetivo: identificar na literatura científica nacional e internacional a abordagem das principais funções que o pai exerce com o neonato, após o seu nascimento. Método: revisão integrativa, realizada no segundo semestre de 2020 com as bases de dados Portal Regional da Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde, Scientific Electronic Library Online e PsycINFO. Foram selecionadas para a busca dos estudos primários, com os descritores: paternidade, relações pai-filho, puerpério e enfermagem. Resultados: identificou-se 711 estudos primários, dos quais foram lidos títulos e resumos, posteriormente a aplicação dos critérios de elegibilidade, selecionou-se 22 para a leitura na íntegra, e destes, sete compuseram a amostra final. Conclusão: As principais funções exercidas pelos pais estão relacionadas aos cuidados neonatais, apoio para mãe durante o puerpério e suporte para organização do lar. No entanto, é notória a escassez da literatura relacionadas à temática.

Descritores: Paternidade; Relações pai-filho; Puerpério; Enfermagem.

ABSTRACT | Objective: to identify in the national and international scientific literature the approach of the main functions that the father performs with the newborn, after birth. Method: an integrative review carried out in the second half of 2020 with the Regional Portal of the Virtual Health Library, Scientific Electronic Library Online and PsycINFO databases. They were selected for the search of primary studies, with the descriptors: paternity, father-child relationships, puerperium and nursing. Results: 711 primary studies were identified, of which titles and abstracts were read, after applying the eligibility criteria, 22 were selected for full reading, and of these, seven comprised the final sample. Conclusion: The main functions performed by parents are related to neonatal care, support for the mother during the puerperium and support for the organization of the home. However, the scarcity of literature related to the subject is notorious.

Descriptors: Paternity; Parent-child relationships; Puerperium; Nursing

RESUMEN | Objetivo: identificar en la literatura científica nacional e internacional el abordaje de las principales funciones que realiza el padre con el recién nacido, después del nacimiento. Método: revisión integradora realizada en el segundo semestre de 2020 con el Portal Regional de la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud, la Biblioteca Científica Electrónica en Línea y las bases de datos PsycINFO. Fueron seleccionados para la búsqueda de estudios primarios, con los descriptores: paternidad, parentesco padre-hijo, puerperio y enfermería. Resultados: Se identificaron 711 estudios primarios, de los cuales se leyeron títulos y resúmenes, luego de aplicar los criterios de elegibilidad, se seleccionaron 22 para lectura completa, y de estos, siete conformaron la muestra final. Conclusión: Las principales funciones que desempeñan los padres están relacionadas con el cuidado neonatal, el apoyo a la madre durante el puerperio y el apoyo a la organización del hogar. Sin embargo, es notoria la escasez de literatura relacionada con el tema.

Descriptores: Paternidad; Relaciones entre padres e hijos; Puerperio; Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

The changes that the world has presented in social, cultural, political and economic terms, in recent times have had repercussions on the family group, as it brings the need to reorganize and adapt parental roles related to the care and education of children. Although the gestational process is intrinsic to women, men, as partners and fathers, receive all the pregnancy and puerperal changes that women experience at this stage. (1)

Paternal involvement is more complicated than it sounds, especially during childbirth, where routines are suddenly changed. During the paternity process, with the inclusion of new

demands in the homes, their individual tensions and social and affective relationships are evidenced. (2) Thus, the roles of men have undergone changes in their family function, requiring greater participation in domestic activities and in childcare. (3)

It cannot be denied that the idea that the woman is the main responsible for domestic tasks and the care of children is still deeply rooted in society. According to a research carried out on this topic, in relation to the division of domestic tasks, there is an unequal distribution between parental roles, generating an overload of tasks for women. (4) However, it is known that paternal participation from the prenatal period helps in the adaptation and care of the child and the postpartum woman, contributing, for example, in the management of breastfeeding and preventing early weaning. (5)

Furthermore, the total or partial absence of the father figure during childhood has been associated with developmental disorders, highlighting the influence on cognitive, social and recognition of their identity, from childhood to adulthood. The lack of this perception can negatively interfere in an affective and participative relationship between father and child. (6)

Thus, there is a need to meet and welcome not only the mother, but also her partner, and guarantee both the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences, helping them to build their maternal and paternal identities. (3)

In the meantime, the importance of the professional nurse emerges, who, based on their theoretical-scientific knowledge, can investigate aspects of the interaction of the mother-father-child triad, in order to promote family well-being in all cycles of life. Furthermore, the nurse has the duty to guide the father so that he can perform the partner's prenatal care, in addition to clarifying his right to participate in pre-

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natal consultations, to be present during labor, delivery, birth and post-natal care. (7)

This right is guaranteed by Law No. 11,108 on April 7, 2005 of the Ministry of Health, which guarantees the parturient, within the scope of the Unified Health System (SUS), the presence of a companion during the entire period of labor and delivery and immediate postpartum. (8)

Considering the lack of public policies that included parents in the birth and postpartum process until the year 2000, in Brazil, this study was justified by the importance of the search for scientific evidence that can assess the impact of the father's participation in the first phase of adaptation of the baby to the world after birth, and the scarcity of Brazilian literature on this theme.

Given the above, the objective of the study was to identify in the national and international scientific literature the approach of the main functions that the father performs with the newborn, after birth.

METHODS

This is an integrative literature review, which provides a synthesis of knowledge and the incorporation of the applicability of results from significant studies in practice. Due to its methodological approach, the integrative review allows for the inclusion of several methods, playing an important role in Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) in nursing. The steps for the elaboration of the study were: definition of the research question, search in the literature of primary studies, data collection, evaluation of included primary studies, interpretation of results and presentation of the review. (9)

In preparing the research question of the integrative review, the strategy of the acronym PICO (Population, Interest Phenomenon and Context) was used to elaborate the guiding question: "What

scientific evidence is available in health journals that portray the father's participation in attention to the child after birth". To ensure the methodological quality of this study, the recommendations contained in the Check-list Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) were used. (10-11)

Data collection was carried out in the second half of 2020, using the databases, Regional Portal of the Virtual Health Library (VHL), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and PsycINFO. The descriptors selected in the Health Science Descriptors (DeCS) of the Virtual Health Library (VHL) were: Paternity, Father-Child Relations, Postpartum Period and Nursing, in addition to their equivalents in Portuguese.

As an inclusion criterion, the review considered original publicly accessible articles that address the role of the father during the first 12 months of the child's life. Articles in Portuguese and English were selected. The time frame for the selection of studies were articles published between 2000 and 2020, since in 2000 the Ministry of Health included the father's visit without time restrictions in all Integrated Units of the SUS, aiming at more adequate assistance to women and to the newborn, seeking to provide the father with closer contact with the woman and the early creation of a bond between father and son. (7)

The review excluded studies that were not found in full, comments, reviews, theses, dissertations, works in the literature review format and articles that did not contemplate the proposed objective of the research.

After identifying the relevant terms for the area of interest of this study, the descriptors were combined with the help of Boolean operators, forming the following search strategy: ("Paternity" OR "Father-Child Relations") AND ("Postpartum Period") AND ("Nur-

guese and English.

Studies were first evaluated by titles and abstracts, based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Publications where the necessary information could not be extracted from the title or abstract were

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selected for full reading, as shown in the selection flow in Figure 1.

To extract data from the selected articles, an instrument developed by the authors was used, containing the following data: identification, author;

year; research location; data source; title of the article, objective, method and the main functions that the father exerts with the newborn, after its birth. The level of evidence of each manuscript inserted in the final sample was also evaluated, according to table 1.

All articles selected for the final sample were named by the letter "A", referring to the word "article", plus an ordinal number. Initially, 711 primary studies were identified through the search strategy, after reading the titles and abstracts of these manuscripts and applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 22 were selected for full reading.

After performing a thorough reading of these articles, seven were selected to make up the final sample, as they responded to the objective of this study. The entire search and selection process for these articles is described in Figure 1.

RESULTS

The synthesis of the seven articles that make up this study, presented in table 2, refers to characteristics relevant to the articles, namely: identification (ID), year of publication, place, methods and results associated with the main functions performed by the father with the child, after birth, until 12 months of life, in addition to the assessment of the level of evidence (LE). Of the 7 articles listed, four (57.1%) were published in international journals and three (42.8%) in national journals. The countries of publication of the manuscripts were Singapore (13), Canada (14), Sweden (15), Pakistan (16) and Brazil (5, 17-18).

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DISCUSSION

From the seven articles listed for the study, the relevance of this investigation is reinforced, given the importance of the theme. Among the results found are: paternal involvement with baby care; feelings and difficulties faced by the father; the father's perception of the support network received, especially by health professionals in their participation before and after birth and the relationship and care that the father has with his partner. (5, 13-18)

The findings of this study in relation to the activities performed by the father are essential because they involve basic care for children under two years old, which should be focused on hygiene, immunization, accident prevention and adequate nutrition, maintaining breastfeeding for 2 years of age or older, with complementary feeding from six months. (5, 13-18)

It was noticed that parents prefer to take care of children aged close to 12 months, a fact that can be justified, as after the eighth month of life, in general, the child is already able to stand up holding something, crawls well, points to objects, picks up small things, participates in games with gestures and begins to sketch words, facilitating contact with other people. (18)

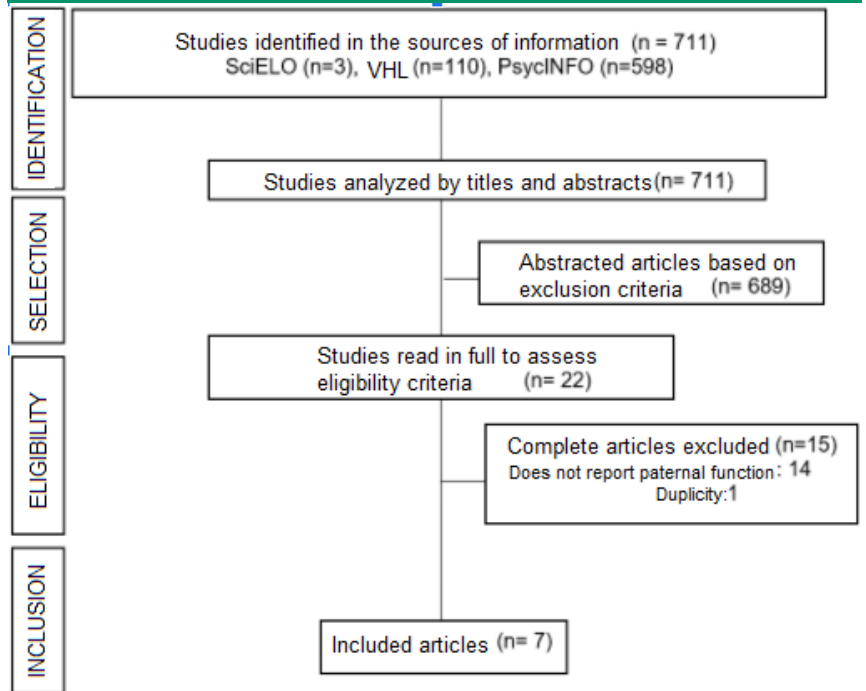
These play activities in the children's universe are extremely impor-

Table 1. Details of the levels of evidence. (Maringá, Paraná, Brazil, 2020).

Level of Evidence	
I	Evidence from syntheses of cohort or case-control studies.
II	Evidence derived from a single cohort or case-control study.
III	Evidence obtained from meta synthesis or synthesis of descriptive studies.
IV	Evidence from descriptive or qualitative studies.
V	Evidence from expert opinions.

Source: Ribeiro e Aroni, 2019(12).

Figure 1. Selection process of articles in the integrative review (Maringá, Paraná, Brazil, 2020).



Source: The authors (2020).

Table 2 – Description of the study sample (Maringá, Paraná, Brazil, 2020).

ID/ Year / Country	Methods	Main parental activities	LE
1A 2018 Singapore(13)	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, conducted through individual semi-structured interviews with 50 parents.	Paternal involvement was formed by previous experiences with early childhood education and experiences with their own parents. Parents performed direct and indirect care for their children, direct care was mainly changing diapers and putting the baby to sleep, while indirect care was related to shopping and household chores.	IV
2A 2004 Canada(14)	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, carried out through individual interviews with 13 parents.	Parents reported holding the baby, bathing and changing diapers, feeding and staying in rooming-in as significant events for them, making them feel closer to the child. The puerperium was full of negative experiences for the father, being exhausted the most mentioned. Regarding breastfeeding, parents found it very difficult and also did not know how to help at that time..	IV

3A 2011 Sweden(15)	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, carried out through individual interviews with 15 parents.	The care exercised with the baby by the parents in this study was to make the baby burp, change diapers, comfort the baby, take him for a walk, put him to sleep, talk to the baby and feed him, this commitment to the child gave the father the feeling of self-worth.	IV
4A 2016 Brazil(5)	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, conducted through interviews with 8 couples.	The parents took them on their laps to sunbathe, they did body hygiene several times and clean the umbilical stump, and some reported cutting the children's nails. Parents felt admiration and pride for the baby and showed willingness to participate in their child's care, when breastfeeding.	IV
5A 2015 Pakis- tan(16)	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, carried out through individual interviews with 12 parents.	Parents felt that family help was a strength to them and most considered it an important supportive factor. They stated that they had no direct role in breastfeeding, but performed other tasks such as taking care of household chores, older children, rest and sleep for their wife and participating in other newborn care, such as changing diapers, burping and holding babies, a minority reported not performing any household chores due to routine work.	IV
6A 2011 Brazil(17)	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, carried out through individual interviews with 4 parents.	Parents participated in a timid way in baby care, claiming that this role belongs only to women, some parents reported helping with bathing and changing diapers.	IV
7A 2016 Brazil	Descriptive study with a qualitative approach, carried out through individual interviews with 35 parents.	The activities performed by the father with the baby were: playing, caring, walking, setting limits, talking, stimulating, showing affection and distracting, in relation to the most mentioned cares were changing diapers, clothes and feeding, they also mentioned taking care of the baby through actions such as being attentive, taking care for the baby not to get hurt, calming down and taking them to the doctor.	IV

Source: The authors (2020).

tant, as they contribute to their development, thus, playing with the child, helps in their socialization, stimulates their senses and abilities and provides a more positive relationship with people.(19)

Other forms of care for many parents are related to the interaction with the baby, limiting their behavior, expressing themselves with the child and showing affection. Even though parents help with some baby care, they believe that this is a woman's responsibility. (18) The inclusion of men in the care process happens progressively and it is their responsibility to enter into the relationship with their child, as it is also up to them to meet the baby's needs. (2)

Parents demonstrate positive experiences with regard to caring for their children, with an intense process of affection for their children since preg-

nancy, which contributes to the person's social construction. In addition, rooming-in has provided the father-son bond, as most caregivers are the baby's father figure. (20) However, child care often extends to the mother, as parents feel insecure in caring for the child. (17)

As for the mental preparation of parents, it is important to emphasize the participation of the figure in prenatal care, this space being essential for parents to enable the sharing of their feelings in this new phase. (3,17)

Studies on support networks in the puerperium primarily emphasize the support offered to postpartum women and demonstrate that they are composed of family members, individuals from the community and health professionals. (21-22) It is up to the health professionals involved, during prenatal care, to provide guidance to women,

their partners and family members, at different educational times. (22)

Although this support has been reported as sufficient by some parents, most studies have pointed to a lack of support and guidance from professionals aimed at the father both in prenatal care, preparing him to assist in the care of the child, as well as in specific guidelines to the care offered after birth and hospital discharge. (13,14,16,18) In this approach, the nurse, in particular, was the professional mentioned by parents in a study carried out in Sweden. (15)

Another aspect that deserves attention is that some parents did not receive information from the hospital team and that nothing was explained to them, leading to a feeling that their role was not recognized. (14) Some reported feeling powerless because the only professional advice available was directly rela-

ted to breastfeeding, while they were waiting for support aimed at the baby, such as first care, more worrying signs and symptoms, and puerperal care. (13)

Considering that the father is also part of the reproductive process and, therefore, should be included in this process (5,7) it is necessary to encourage their participation from rooming in and offer the support of the nursing staff in order to help them experience this moment, through actions to provide guidance and clear information, anticipating their anxieties. (7,14,23,24)

Parents who stayed longer in rooming-in were more involved with their children and wives, and experienced a more intense experience compared to parents who spent less than six hours a day in the ward. It was also observed that when the delivery is cesarean, many parents end up staying together with their wife, to offer more support and end up being more involved in the care of the child. (14)

Some parents reported the desire to protect and offer care to the baby already on the ward, they felt proud of their responsibility and took care of the child, this gave them a feeling of greater commitment, increasing their self-esteem. (15)

A study carried out with mothers in the postpartum period presents data regarding the support these mothers

received from the fathers of their children and highlights how these actions are positive in the mothers' perception, providing them with instrumental support in caring for the baby. However, despite the fact that the mothers considered the participation of the fathers to be positive, some mothers did not trust the care to the fathers, as they assumed that their husbands did not have the ability to safely carry out direct care tasks (5,13) and the traditional roles attributed to men and women were maintained, in which the fathers remain responsible for the family support and, the women, for the care of the home and children. (13)

Parents experienced different feelings and difficulties in this postpartum period, they mentioned that the reality was not the same they were expecting and that they faced many obstacles when getting involved with their child. They reported the desire to be a responsible and involved parent and felt difficulties in face of unexpected situations such as when the baby is sick, incessant crying, exhaustion from having impaired sleep and problems with the interaction of other children with the new member of the family. (13-14)

Thus, their participation consisted in staying by the side of the wife, being solicitous for the help of their partner. All parents sought to promote

comfort and tranquility to their wives, this fact can partially contribute to the formation and expulsion of breast milk. (5,14)

Given the above, it is observed the importance of the father's presence in the baby's birth process and that, when parents have positive experiences during pregnancy, it is possible that their capacity to support their partners in the postpartum period increases. This shows the importance of including parents from prenatal care and throughout the child's development. (25)

The results of this study can help in discussions and reflections about the importance of the paternal role during the first year of your child's life.

CONCLUSION

Among the main functions performed by the father in the baby's first year of life, there is direct care for the child, such as bathing, diaper changing, nutrition and sleep; performing housework and taking care of other children; emotional support for mothers during the puerperal period, considering a process of maternal exposure and vulnerability.

In view of the scarcity of the theme, the importance of producing new studies is highlighted in order to support nursing interventions for the needs of parents.

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