Audit as a tool for the continuous improvement of nursing care

RESUMO | Objetivo: investigar na literatura ferramentas de auditoria de enfermagem a fim de analisar a qualidade da assistência de enfermagem. Método: Trata-se de uma pesquisa de revisão integrativa no período de janeiro de 2021. Para selecionar os manuscritos foi realizada busca na Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde. Foram utilizados os descritores em saúde conforme padronizados nos descritores em saúde, sendo manuscritos publicados entre 2015 a 2020. Resultados: Dos manuscritos selecionados, nove são de natureza metodológica, os quais utilizaram da implementação de software ou tecnologia para gestão de auditoria a fim de analisar os cuidados de enfermagem. Foi percebido que as ferramentas implementadas trouxeram aspectos positivos voltados para o gerenciamento, cuidado de enfermagem e dimensionamento. Conclusão: pode perceber que a auditoria de enfermagem é um instrumento fundamental para avaliar de forma sistemática a assistência prestada ao cliente, bem como para apontar soluções para as deficiências encontradas, além de medidas de caráter preventivo.
Descritores: Auditoria de Enfermagem; Qualidade da Assistência à Saúde; Avaliação de Programas e Instrumentos de Pesquisa; ferramentas.

ABSTRACT | Objective: to investigate nursing audit tools in the literature in order to analyze the quality of nursing care. Methodo: This is a systematic review research. To select the manuscripts, a search was performed in the Virtual Health Library. Health descriptors were used as standardized in health descriptors, and manuscripts were published between 2015 and 2020. Results: Of the selected manuscripts, nine are methodological in nature, which used the implementation of software or technology for audit management in order to analyze nursing care. It was perceived that the implemented tools brought positive aspects focused on management, nursing care and dimensioning. Conclusion: it can be realized that nursing auditing is a fundamental instrument to systematically evaluate the care provided to the client, as well as to point out solutions to the deficiencies found, in addition to preventive measures.
Descriptors: Nursing Audit; Quality of Health Care; Evaluation of Research Programs and Instruments; Tools.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: investigar las herramientas de auditoría de enfermería en la literatura con el fin de analizar la calidad de la atención de enfermería. Metodo: Esta es una investigación de revisión sistemática. Para seleccionar los manuscritos, se realizó una búsqueda en la Biblioteca virtual de salud. Los descriptores de estado se utilizaron como estandarizados en descriptores de salud, y los manuscritos se publicaron entre 2015 y 2020. Resultados: De los manuscritos seleccionados, nueve son de naturaleza metodológica, que utiliza la implementación de software o tecnología para la gestión de auditorías con el fin de analizar la atención de enfermería. Se percibió que las herramientas implementadas aportaban aspectos positivos centrados en la gestión, la atención de enfermería y el dimensionamiento. Conclusión: se puede realizar que la auditoría de enfermería es un instrumento fundamental para evaluar sistemáticamente la atención prestada al cliente, así como para señalar soluciones a las deficiencias encontradas, además de medidas preventivas.
Descriptores: Auditoría de enfermería; Calidad de la atención médica; Evaluación de Programas e Instrumentos de Investigación; Herramientas.

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INTRODUCTION

The audit consists of the systematic and formal evaluation of an activity to determine if it is being carried out in accordance with its objectives. Thus, it has been of fundamental importance for health institutions that, driven by globalization, technological advances and scientific progress, have sought, in addition to low costs, the excellence of the services provided. 1

Health auditing has emerged as an important tool for measuring the quality (Audit of care) and costs (Audit of costs) of health institutions, which aims not only at reviewing and controlling the efficiency and effectiveness and pointing out failures and non-conformities of care and accounts, but provide concrete data to ensure adequacy, thus demonstrating its educational character. 2

The nursing audit is characterized as a method for careful evaluation of the services provided by the multidisciplinary team that makes up customer service, where the role of the professional nurse auditor is of vital importance. 3

Within this context, it is worth highlighting the importance of nursing records as legal documents, which promote communication between the

multidisciplinary team and provide subsidies for auditing, research and education. 2,4

The audit consists of the systematic and formal evaluation of an activity to determine if it is being carried out in accordance with its objectives. In healthcare organizations, this practice is necessary due to globalization and technological advances that print the reality of recent years, making the market increasingly competitive. 1

In the health area, the first audit was carried out in the United States in 1918, by the physician George Gray Ward, with the main objective of verifying the quality of care provided to the patient through records in the medical records. 5,6 This activity was actually incorporated into health institutions in the 1980s, a need generated by technological advances, expansion of market globalization and the consequent increase in customer requirements. 5

In this sense, although health auditing in Brazil was instituted in 1984, its history began in 1923, when social security and its various social protection institutes emerged through the Eloy Chaves Law. In 1966, with the creation of the National Institute of Social Security – INPS – the management of the various institutes was unified and the auditing activities, carried out by their supervisors, took place through patient records and hospital accounts. 8

It was only after 1976 that the audit was established for formal and technical control of hospital bills, which came to be called GIH - Hospital Admission Guide (Guia de Internação Hospitalar) - which in turn, in 1983, was replaced by AIH - Hospital Admission Authorization (Autorização de Internação Hospitalar). In that same year, the doctor-auditor is recognized and the audit is carried out in the hospitals themselves. 8

In Brazil, the first quotes about auditing date from the colonial period, where "the eye of the king" was highlighted by the Portuguese crown to verify the correct collection of taxes for the Treasury, repressing and, mainly, punishing fraud. 4 However, with regard to the first concrete evidence, it can be seen through Decree No. 2,935, of June 16th, 1862, which approved the reorganization of the Companhia de Navegação por Vapor and determined the annual call of auditors for the company's accounts were evaluated. 8,6

The evolution of auditing in Brazil is directly related to the progressive growth of international companies that needed auditing to verify the veracity of their issued accounting reports. However, it became official in 1968, through the Central Bank of Brazil. 9,10

Nowadays, nursing auditing plays an important role, not only for public institutions, but also for health plan operators and private institutions, which seek profitability and excellence in the services provided. With this, the main objective of these companies is to reduce waste of inputs and human resources, which directly benefits their customers.

Nursing auditing is, therefore, cha- racterized by evaluation and control processes, where, in addition to detecting non-conformities, it must point out solutions, thus assuming its educational role. 4

In this context, this study aims to analyze the nursing audit tools used in the literature to achieve excellence in nursing care.

METHOD

This is an integrative review research. For analysis and synthesis of the material, the following steps were observed: 1) exploratory reading; 2) selective reading; 3) critical reading; 4) completion of a summary of each selected material; 5) analysis and discussion of the data obtained.

To formulate the research problem and systematic search adoption, the PICO strategy (Patient, Intervention, Comparison and Outcome) was used (TABLE 1). 12

PICo strategy 12 (Table 2) was used in order to perform a literature search with the following guiding question: "which audit tools are used to improve

Table 1 – Description of the PICO strategy, 2020		
Acronym	**Definition**	**Description**
P	Problem	Audit tools
I	Intervention	Tools implementation
C	Comparison	Audit tools analysis
O	Outcome	Analysis of tools to assess the quality of health care

Source: The author, 2021

Table 2 – Description of the PICo search strategy, 2020				
P		**I**		**Co**
Nursing audit	and/ or	Quality of Healthcare	and/or	Evaluation of Research Programs and Instruments; tools

Source: The author, 2021

the provision of nursing care?".

To select the manuscripts, a search was carried out in the Virtual Health Library, which provides articles based on evidence indexed in quality scientific bases. The health descriptors as standardized in the DECs were used: Nursing Audit; Quality of Healthcare; Evaluation of Research Programs and Instruments; Nursing Audit; Quality of Healthcare; tools. The following inclusion criteria were adopted: manuscripts published between 2015 and 2020, in the open access modality, and articles

repeated in the indexed databases and those that do not address the study topic or answer the research question were excluded..

RESULTS

75 manuscripts were found, which are indexed in the MEDLINE (43), BDENF (19), LILACS (12) and IBECS (1) databases. After careful analysis of the articles according to selection criteria, 11 manuscripts were selected to compose this study. Of the selected articles,

five were published in 2019, two in 2018, one in 2017 and three in 2016 as shown in table 3.

Of the selected manuscripts, nine are of a methodological nature, which used the implementation of software or technology for audit management in order to analyze nursing care. It evidenced in the search that the implemented tools brought positive aspects related to the management of nursing care, dimensioning and evaluation of the quality of nursing care.

Table 3 – Description of selected manuscripts. Jaú – SP. 2020.

Author/Year	Title	Objective	Method	Tools/Considerations
Dourado et al., 2019 [13]	Pediatric child care management software	Software validation for care management	Methodological study	The instrument allows health professionals to plan and implement care programs according to their needs, in addition to identifying patient care, being a great ally for the management of health services and support for the management processes of institutions
Bowdle et al., 2019 [14]	Electronic auditing and feedback with positive rewards improve anesthesia provider compliance with a barcode-based drug safety system.	Analyze the implementation of a described barcode-based drug safety system	Methodological study	You can see that the individual performance data feedback system of the provider brought a significant improvement in relation to the performance evaluation of professionals
Boamah, 2019 [15]	Emergence of informal clinical leadership as a catalyst for improving the quality of patient care and job satisfaction	Analyze the critical attributes of clinical leadership	Cross-sectional study	A structural equation modeling was used in the analysis of moment structures software and you can see that by analyzing the clinical leaders of the nursing team have the potential to improve the provision of care to the patient.
Zambonin et al., 2019 [16]	Classification of emergency patients according to nursing dependence	Characterize the degree of dependence on nursing care of hospitalized users	Quantitative, cross-sectional study	A Fugulin, Gaidzinski and Kurcgant Patient Classification System (PCS) was used. It was noticed that the instrument provides reliable results for hospital and nursing staff management.

Varndell et al., 2019 [17]	The use and feasibility of an online software system to support the assessment of accuracy and consistency in the application of the Australasian Screening Scale	Assess the use and feasibility of a software system called Triage Quality Assessment Software in emergency departments	Descriptive and exploratory study	It was found that the screening quality assessment software tested for improvement in the quality of emergency screening.
Pena; Melleiro, [18] 2018	Adverse events resulting from communication failures: reflections on a care transition model	Analysis of the communication process and occurrence of adverse events	Theoretical-reflective study	Realized the need to implement a communication tool during the transition of care
Vandresen et al., [19] 2018	Classification of patients and dimensioning of nursing professionals: contributions of a management technology.	Application of patient classification and nursing professional sizing	Convergent Care Research	The PRAXIS® technology had a positive aspect as it contributed to the management, classification of patients and sizing of the nursing staff.
Faeda; Perroca, [20] 2017	Compliance of nursing prescription to care needs: nurses' understanding	Analyze the compliance of the nurse's prescription with the care needs of the hospitalized patient	Descriptive study with a quantitative approach	Through this study, you can see the need to adapt the nurses prescription according to the needs of patients, in addition to implementing strategies and using assessment instruments
Ferreira et al., 2016 [21]	External customer satisfaction with nursing care	Analyze external customer satisfaction in relation to the nursing care received	Cross-sectional study	The authors used an instrument adapted and validated in Brazil, the Patient Satisfaction Instrument (PSI). They realized that through systematized external assessment using a validated instrument, the results suggested the creation of new tools in order to systematize and improve the management of nursing services in the institution that was the focus of the study.
Tsuru et al., 2016 [22]	Quality Assessment of Nursing Observation Based on Survey of Nursing Documents Using NAVI Nursing	Analysis of nursing care documentation	Research tool development	The authors have developed a thought process support system tool to plan, record and assess the daily life of nursing using the contents of NursingNAVI ® Content for evaluating the quality of nursing observation.
Lorenzetti et al., [23] 2016	Technology for managing hospital inpatient units	Describing the PRAXIS technology and its construction process	Methodological research	You can see that the implementation of the software brought benefits to the unit's performance with participatory planning, care process management, people management, materials management, quality management and use of an electronic panel.

Source: The author, 2021

DISCUSSION

When grouping the information from the studies studied, it was observed that 5 described the dimensioning of the nursing staff as a strategy in the quality of care (Dourado et al., 2019 13 , Zambonin et al., 2019 16 , Vandresen et al., 2018 19 , Faeda; Perroca, 2017 20 , Ferreira et al., 2016 21) evidencing 45.4% of the articles found that the number of staff interferes with the quality of care and becomes a concern for audit teams. Regarding information technology with software as a basis for care management and quality assessment of care, 4 were found comprising (Boamah, 2019 15, Varndell et al., 2019 17, Tsuru et al., 2016 22,Lorenzetti et al., 2016 23), comprising 36.4% of the articles found. The other findings that report the communication and transition of care and professional performance as no less important and essential for the quality of care were found in 2 studies, comprising 18.2% of the articles found (Bowdle et al., 2019 14, Pena; Melleiro, 2018 18).

According to the American Society for Quality Control, quality occurs when the characteristics of a product or service are able to satisfactorily meet all stated or implied needs. In nursing, it is observed that some principles of the Quality Management system have been used with good results, such as the evaluation of care through the Quality Audit. 24

Quality management consists of a management tool, based on administrative theories in which principles such as employee motivation, customer participation, but mainly satisfaction for the excellence of quality stand out. They also emphasize that the quality assessment processes are diversified and are in constant progress, according to changes and achievements in the area, such as the determination of nursing diagnoses and interventions, in addition to standardization of techniques and routines, among others. 5

The nursing audit is an information and control system whose main objective is to prove the efficiency and effectiveness, as well as to detect failures, in processes and areas related to nursing services, through concrete data, so that, when necessary, there is a re-

The patient's medical record is increasingly becoming a legal document and, therefore, used as an important tool in the assessment of the quality of care provided during the hospitalization period

direction of actions in a corrective or preventive manner. 4

Professional nursing practice often occurs in an unsystematic way, due to the resistance of professionals to modify their daily, technical and fragmented activities. 1 The search for quality excellence in nursing care resulted in better professional qualification, where protocols, standards and other management tools played a fundamental role, acting as methodologies that guide the activities and functions of the nursing team. 3

It is of paramount importance that the entire nursing team is committed to the quality of care rather than being limited in the face of work demand, and for that, nurses must educate and motivate their team in order to ensure a care practice that promotes integral care, based on scientific knowledge. 1

Especially when it comes to issues related to health, quality of customer care and guarantee of effective and efficient care, the multidisciplinary communication process is an extremely important tool. In this sense, it is necessary to make professionals aware of the real importance of notes in medical records, especially in nursing, considering that they are the professionals who remain closer to clients and continuously. 2,4

The patient's medical record is increasingly becoming a legal document and, therefore, used as an important tool in the assessment of the quality of care provided during the hospitalization period. 5

Thus, there is the importance of continuing education so that through systematized training, the team is qualified with regard to customer service with excellence in quality and valuing notes and records following the stipulated standards. 1,25

Therefore, it is the care nurse's responsibility to maintain the organization, planning and quality of their team's work, dedicating special attention to nursing records and, when necessary, using continuing education, a tool that provides professional improvement. 1,6

In this sense, when identifying deficient areas, through audits, the nurse in this practice can perform or suggest opportunities for improvement, carry out training and update documents and practices in order to improve the qua-

lity of that area, using education as a practice of process development , since the result of the process comes from people. 9,26

CONCLUSION

Through this study, it was possible to understand the importance of management as an audit tool, its relevance within health institutions as a tool for evaluating and improving the quality of care provided, evidenced in 82% of the articles (Dourado et al., 2019 13 , Zambonin et al., 2019 16 , Vandresen et al., 2018 19 , Faeda; Perroca, 2017 20 , Ferreira et al., 2016 21 Boamah, 2019 15, Varndell et al., 2019 17, Tsuru et al., 2016 22,Lorenzetti et al., 2016 23)

The use of nursing audit tools is essential to systematically assess the care provided to the client, as well as to point out solutions for the deficiencies found, in addition to preventive measures. Found in 18.2% of articles (Bowdle et al., 2019 14, Pena; Melleiro, 2018 18).

There is a need to implement technologies, as well as nursing audit protocols as a continuous and transforming instrument in the management of health services.

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