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Nurse training for elderly care: a documental analysis of undergraduate education in Paraná

elderly care

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RESUMO | Objetivo: Analisar a inserção do cuidado ao idoso nos cursos de graduação em enfermagem das Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES) públicas e privadas do Paraná. Método: Trata-se de estudo descritivo, exploratório, de abordagem qualitativa, que utilizou a análise documental. Foi realizada a identificação das IES e cursos de graduação por meio do acesso à plataforma online do Ministério da Educação e, posteriormente, às páginas oficiais das IES para identificar conteúdos relacionados ao cuidado gerontológico. As ementas foram analisadas pelo Software Interface R IraMuTeQ® Resultados: Foram identificadas 60 IES e obteve-se informações de 52 cursos. Destes, 53,9% ofertavam disciplinas específicas de saúde do idoso e 46,1% possuíam disciplinas mistas. Na análise de similitude os principais eixos organizadores foram: idoso, enfermagem e processo. Conclusão: Pouco mais da metade dos cursos de enfermagem aborda o cuidado ao idoso em disciplinas específicas. A formação deve estar alinhada às políticas da atenção à pessoa idosa.
Descritores: Idoso; Saúde do Idoso; Enfermagem Geriátrica; Programas de Graduação em Enfermagem; Educação Superior.

ABSTRACT | Objective: To analyze the insertion of elderly care in undergraduate nursing courses at public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Paraná. Method: This is a descriptive, exploratory study, with a qualitative approach, which used document analysis. The identification of HEIs and undergraduate courses was carried out through access to the Ministry of Education's online platform and, later, to the official pages of the HEIs to identify content related to gerontological care. The menus were analyzed by the R IraMuTeQ® Interface Software. Results: 60 HEIs were identified and information was obtained from 52 courses. Of these, 53.9% offered specific subjects on elderly health and 46.1% had mixed subjects. In the similarity analysis, the main organizing axes were: elderly, nursing and process. Conclusion: Just over half of nursing courses address elderly care in specific disciplines. Training must be aligned with care policies for the elderly.
Keywords: Elderly; Elderly Health; Geriatric Nursing; Undergraduate Nursing Programs; Higher education.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: Analizar la inserción del cuidado de ancianos en los cursos de graduación en enfermería de Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior (IES) públicas y privadas de Paraná. Método: Se trata de un estudio descriptivo, exploratorio, con abordaje cualitativo, que utilizó el análisis de documentos. La identificación de las IES y carreras de grado se realizó a través del acceso a la plataforma en línea del Ministerio de Educación y, posteriormente, a las páginas oficiales de las IES para identificar contenidos relacionados con la atención gerontológica. Los menús fueron analizados por el software de interfaz R IraMuTeQ®. Resultados: Se identificaron 60 IES y se obtuvo información de 52 cursos. De estos, 53,9% ofrecieron temas específicos sobre la salud del anciano y 46,1% temas mixtos. En el análisis de similitud, los principales ejes organizadores fueron: anciano, enfermería y proceso. Conclusión: poco más de la mitad de los cursos de enfermería abordan el cuidado de ancianos en disciplinas específicas. La formación debe estar alineada con las políticas de atención a las personas mayores.
Palabras claves: Anciano; Salud del Anciano; Enfermería Geriátrica; Programas de Pregrado en Enfermería; Educación más alta.

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil is going through relevant changes in its demographic profile, with a significant increase in the number of elderly people at the expense of younger age groups. (1) This scenario presents an unprecedented challenge and demands policies capable of dealing with the heterogeneity of aging so that individuals can live autonomously and independently for as long as possible. (2)

The National Health Policy for the Elderly proposes actions whose objective is to maintain and/or promote the functional capacity of people over 60years of age. One of these is the readjustment of the curriculum of the cou-

rses of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), so that they can cover aspects of aging and health of the elderly more broadly. (3) Prior to this, the National Policy for the Elderly already pointed out the need to include Geriatrics and Gerontology as a discipline in undergraduate courses in the health area (4) and the Elderly Statute on content aimed at the aging process at all levels of education. (5)

The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN - Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais) created to guide the design of the curricula of HEIs in Brazil, seek in health courses, a training of professionals who recognize the demands so that they can intervene in a timely manner (6) With regard to the elderly, the nurse, in particular, must have skills to work in health care, (6-7) as well as in the elaboration and execution of public policies, (8) at all levels of care that serve this public. Therefore, it is necessary that nurses have content in their training that includes the health of the elderly in its multidimensionality.

When considering that teaching about the health of the elderly in nursing graduation influences the quality of care and that there is no uniformity of this among the courses offered, as well as the development of competences for the care of the elderly public (9) the question becomes inevitable: how is the issue of care for the elderly inserted in undergraduate nursing courses in the state of Paraná?

OBJECTIVE

To analyze the insertion of elderly care in undergraduate nursing courses at public and private HEIs in Paraná.

METHOD

This is a descriptive, exploratory study, with a qualitative approach, using documental analysis of the curricula and menus of undergraduate nur-

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sing courses at HEIs in Paraná.

In December 2018, the identification of HEIs and undergraduate courses was carried out, through access to the online platform of the Ministry of Education (e-MEC). Between December 2018 and January 2019, the official pages of the HEIs were accessed to identify how the theme care for the elderly was inserted. To this end, the curricula and menus were searched for the existence of a specific subject of health for the elderly or if the care for the elderly was addressed in another, non-specific subject.

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The data referring to the characterization of the subjects (specific and non-specific health of the elderly) were presented in absolute and relative frequency. The menus gave rise to a corpus that was analyzed by the Software Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires (IRaMuTeQ®).

The resources used in the software were the word cloud and the similarity analysis. (10) The first graphically organizes the words according to the frequency they appear in the speeches, while the second is based on graph theory and aims to identify the connection between groups of words.

The research project of this study was forwarded to the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research with Human Beings (COPEP) of the Universidade Estadual de Maringá and, as it uses data

in the public domain, it was exempted from ethical consideration.

RESULTS

In the e-MEC system, 60 HEIs were identified in the state of Paraná, both public and private, which provided active undergraduate nursing courses. Of the HEIs, 38 made available data on the curriculum on the official online page, 13 on the curriculum and course syllabus and nine did not provide both.

With the data obtained from the official websites, in addition to those requested via e-mail and telephone, information was obtained from 52 undergraduate courses. Of these, 32 provided only the grid and 20 the grid and menu.

No information was obtained from eight HEIs. As for the characterization of the discipline, it was noted that just over half of the courses (53.9% n=28) offer specific disciplines on health for the elderly. The other courses (46.1% n=24) address care for the elderly in mixed subjects, that is, subjects that address other themes, not being directed only to gerontological nursing.

The word cloud, represented by figure 1, was generated from the analysis of the corpus of the 20 available menus. In this, the most cited terms were: elderly (n= 35); nursing (n=23); health (n=21) and; adult (n=19).

The similarity analysis allowed the visualization of the connection between the words contained in the menus and how they were correlated in the description of the contents aimed at the care of the elderly, as shown in Figure 2. The organizing axes found were: elderly, nursing and process.
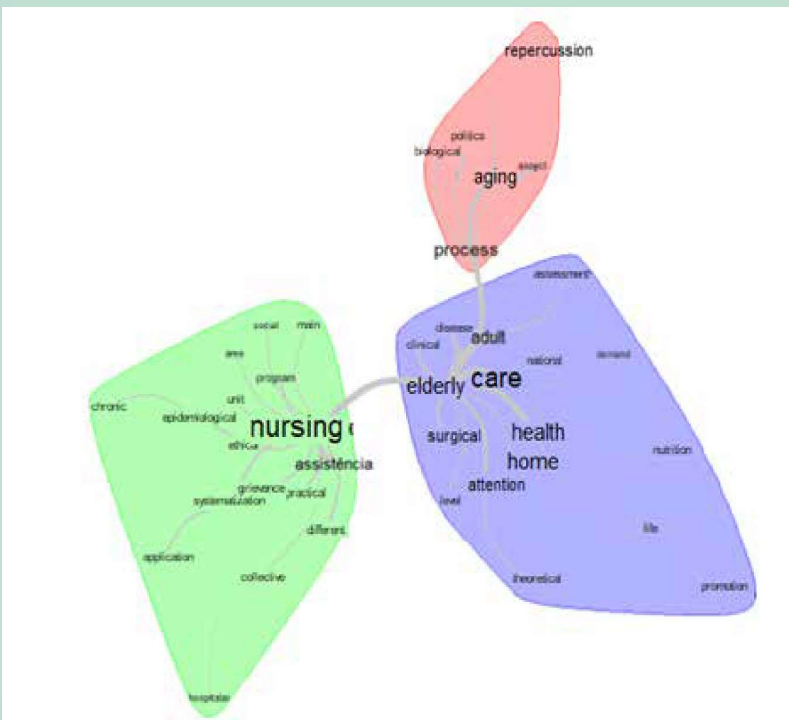
DISCUSSION

The approach to the elderly was identified in all analyzed courses, associated with another area, such as adult health, or specifically, the health of the

Figure 1. Word cloud: care for the elderly in undergraduate nursing courses in Paraná.

Source: Prepared by the authors using the IraMuTeQ® software

Figure 2. Analysis of similarity: care for the elderly in undergraduate nursing courses in Paraná.

Source: Prepared by the authors using the IraMuTeQ® software

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elderly. Just over half (53.9%) of the HEIs in Paraná address care for the elderly in specific subjects, which differs from the national scenario, in which 34.4% of the HEIs offer this curriculum structure. (11)

It is essential that, increasingly, content related to the health of the elderly be inserted in the curricula of HEIs, especially in specific subjects. It is considered that in this way, teaching can cover in a more adequate way, the aspects of the multidimensionality of the health of the elderly and, also, the heterogeneity, which the aging process is surrounded by.

Regarding the word cloud analysis feature, it was noted that the highlighted words praise the nurse's responsibility as a protagonist in the care process for the elderly. It is understood, by the frequency of words, that the teaching of health of the elderly proposes to address aspects related to the profile of aging, the social and health demands arising from this process and the aspects inherent to the care of people aged 60 and over. The word 'adult' was the fourth most frequent, possibly because the health of the elderly is addressed together with adult health in part of the HEIs and the analysis of the menus fully encompassed them.

The similarity analysis brought indications about the connection between the words. In the hierarchical classification, the words 'elderly' and 'nursing' and 'process' that connect with others have greater representation. The 'elderly' axis states that the elderly are the object of attention and care; the process axis deals with the aging process and its repercussions; the 'nursing' axis is connected with words that denote the existence of content on the systematization of care in the various fields of work of nurses.

It is important to consider that the concept of health in aging is translated beyond the absence of disease, when considering, above all, the functional capacity, that is, the autonomy (decision capacity) and independence (execution capacity) of individuals to carry out activities that are important to them. (12) In this sense, when analy-

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zing the menus, the absence of terms that refer to the functionality of the elderly individual drew attention.

It is noteworthy that the training of nurses should cover the development of skills for the care of the elderly, in line with public policies in the area and also with the current care model. (11) However, research carried out with Primary Health Care (PHC) nurses showed that these professionals do not feel able to care for the elderly population with regard to the multidimensional assessment. This difficulty was related to the gap in academic training in terms of competences for the care of the elderly public, which were obtained from experiences in professional practice. (13)

One aspect that must be considered in the training of nurses is related to the understanding of the care model used to organize the health system. Likewise, it is necessary to understand the arrangements of the Health Care Network (HCN) and the competence of each level. It is important to give visibility to PHC, which must know the elderly in its area of operation, using territorialization, punctuating the factors that interfere in the health-disease process and stratifying the elderly in terms of their vulnerability. This in order to direct and scale care at all levels of care. (12)

In addition to analyzing the inclusion of content related to the health of the elderly in the curricula of HEIs, it is necessary to reflect on the teaching-learning strategies used. An integrative review study, whose objective was to analyze the training of nursing students in the care of the elderly, evidenced the predominant use of the traditional methodology, focusing on the transmission of knowledge. (14)

The use of active methodologies can favor the teaching-learning process and, therefore, the formation of skills and competences of students, making them autonomous in the future scenario of professional practice, capable of developing new ways of solving problems facing the biopsychosocial needs of the elderly. (15)

An integrative review pointed out that nursing students have a negative attitude towards engaging in gerontology work. (16) Other studies have

shown, from the perspective of students, that professors do not highlight the potential for advancement in careers in gerontology (17) and that the ability of gerontological nursing professors and the students' willingness to work in the area are associated. This presents a challenge to the teaching staff, which must have a staff with the skills to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards gerontology work among students. (18)

There is also relevance in the practice scenarios that are configured as articulating tools for the development of competences. These can be adopted when considering the sectors and points of care that provide assistance to the elderly. In the health sector, the practice scenarios can be the elderly's home, Basic Health Units, Specialized Ambulatory Care and Tertiary Care (hospitals). In terms of social assistance, the coexistence centers, day care centers and Long Stay Institutions are configured as alternatives.

As for the limitation of the study, the difficulty in accessing information on the official pages of the HEIs, the unavailability of online menus and, later, the lack of responses from some institutions, stand out. These aspects made it difficult to express the panorama of the offer of disciplines in the HEIs of Paraná.

CONCLUSION

Just over half of the nursing courses in the state of Paraná address elderly care in specific disciplines. The analysis of the menus allowed us to understand that the teaching of care for the elderly proposes to address the population aging process and its repercussions. In these, it is also understood that the elderly are the object of care and attention, which must be carried out in a systematic way, at different levels and points of care.

It is considered important for HEIs to assess whether the proposed menus and the teaching-learning methodologies used actually provide future nurses with skills to care for the elderly at different levels and areas of activity.

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