

Spirituality in oncological care through the viewpoint of nurses, the light of Jean Watson's theory

RESUMO | Objetivo: Identificar na literatura a importância da oferta do cuidado espiritual nos serviços oncológicos, baseado na teoria do Cuidado Humano de Jean Watson. Método: Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo, a partir de uma revisão integrativa. Os estudos foram selecionados nas bases de dados: Scielo, Lilacs e Medline, entre janeiro e fevereiro de 2022. Resultado: Após seleção e análise minuciosa dos artigos de acordo com o protocolo de busca estabelecido, optou-se por utilizar 08 estudos para construção da revisão integrativa. Trabalhar o lado espiritual desses pacientes, os auxilia a ressignificar todo esse momento de dor e sofrimento. Dessa forma, percebeu-se que a capacitação dos profissionais são ferramentas eficazes para prestar esse cuidado espiritual. Conclusão: Diante dos dados oriundos, chegou-se à conclusão que a temática abordada se encontra escassa e desatualizada nas plataformas digitais. Desse modo, vê-se a necessidade da disseminação do tema.

Descritores: Espiritualidade; Assistência de enfermagem; Integralidade em saúde; Teoria de enfermagem; Serviço Hospitalar de Oncologia.

ABSTRACT | Objective: To identify in the literature the importance of offering spiritual care in cancer services, based on Jean Watson's theory of Human Care. Method: This is a qualitative study, based on an integrative review. The studies were selected from the databases: Scielo, Lilacs and Medline, between January and February 2022. Result: After selection and thorough analysis of the articles according to the established search protocol, it was decided to use 08 studies to construct the integrative review. Working on the spiritual side of these patients helps them to re-signify all this moment of pain and suffering. In this way, it was noticed that the training of professionals are effective tools to provide this spiritual care. Conclusion: In view of the data, it was concluded that the topic addressed is scarce and outdated on digital platforms. Thus, there is a need to disseminate the theme.

Keywords: Spirituality; Nursing assistance; Integrality in health; Nursing theory; Hospital Oncology Service.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: Identificar en la literatura la importancia de ofrecer cuidado espiritual en los servicios oncológicos, a partir de la teoría del Cuidado Humano de Jean Watson. Método: Se trata de un estudio cualitativo, basado en una revisión integradora. Los estudios fueron seleccionados de las bases de datos: Scielo, Lilacs y Medline, entre enero y febrero de 2022. Resultado: Después de la selección y análisis exhaustivo de los artículos según el protocolo de búsqueda establecido, se decidió utilizar 08 estudios para construir la revisión integradora. Trabajar el lado espiritual de estos pacientes les ayuda a ressignificar todo este momento de dolor y sufrimiento. De esta forma, se percibió que la formación de profesionales son herramientas eficaces para brindar ese cuidado espiritual. Conclusión: A la vista de los datos, se concluyó que el tema abordado es escaso y desactualizado en las plataformas digitales. Por lo tanto, existe la necesidad de difundir el tema.

Palabras claves: Espiritualidad; Asistencia de enfermería; Integralidad en salud; teoría de enfermería; Servicio de Oncología Hospitalaria.

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INTRODUÇÃO

When talking about caring, one can soon associate nursing. The professionals who make up this class are objects of great importance at all levels of health care, being in fact an essential support for those who are undergoing some type

of treatment. In this way, caring can be defined as dedication, zeal, support and appreciation of the life of the other individual who is receiving care. Nursing's primary role is to protect, support, rehabilitate and promote the health of its patients.⁽¹⁾

Faced with the suffering and emotional exhaustion experienced by cancer patients, health professionals, especially the nursing team, adhere to a holistic view, focused not only on the physical needs, but also the emotional, spiritual and social needs of this individual. Thus, some authors bring spirituality as an area of great value in the lives of cancer patients, as it is directly linked to God, thus transcending science. So that

it becomes an object of strength for individuals.⁽²⁾

In recent times, studies show that the assistance offered by health professionals has been more humanized. Many countries have invested and worked on training nurses and doctors, with a focus on preparing these professionals to attend not only to physical needs, but also to understand other human dimensions.⁽³⁾

Thus, studies show that spiritual suffering is quite recurrent and prevalent in individuals with malignant neoplasms, and more frequent in the elderly population. This fact reveals the importance of offering spiritual care by nurses who assess and monitor these individuals.

The research also discusses religious practices, exposing that such beliefs are positive points for the mental health of patients and should be taken into account by the nursing team from the first appointment.⁽⁴⁾

In this same perspective, nursing theories are extremely important tools for qualified assistance, guiding professionals regarding eligible care for each individual in a particular way. So that each theory seeks to encompass a different perspective and a specific need between the professional, the patient and the environment.⁽⁵⁾

In this context, we can mention Jean Watson, with his theory of Human Care, which states that care can go beyond physical actions, that is, it can reach the transpersonal. A care that transcends time, space and matter, seeking a rehabilitation of health, independent of physical healing. Knowing that nursing care is often focused on physical needs, it can be said that nursing is also capable of accessing the spiritual side of each patient, through empathy and communication, establishing a bond of trust and harmonization with the patient.⁽⁶⁻⁷⁾

This field of care deserves attention from the professionals who make up the nursing team and need to be attentive to the spiritual needs of patients, as part of health care, since the imbalances arising from the spirituality of these individuals can cause spiritual suffering, significantly interfering in the process of recovery and rehabilitation of the individual in the face of health-related events, such as after the discovery of the diagnosis of a disease, especially those with no expectation of cure.⁽⁸⁾

Therefore, the Theory of Human Care is shown to be an effective tool for the care offered by the nursing team to cancer patients. In view of the above, the present study proposes to investigate in the literature the importance of spiritual care in oncology services, based on Jean Watson's theory. And so, to investigate the perception of nursing profes-

sionals about spiritual care, to investigate the association that the literature brings between spiritual care and the theory of human care and finally, to investigate whether spiritual care is an effective practice within the care provided by the nursing team and whether these professionals are prepared for this practice in the care of patients in oncology services.

For the construction of the study, the following guiding question was used: What does the literature bring about the perception of care nurses about the importance of spiritual care, based on Jean Watson's theory?

METHOD

The present study is an integrative literature review with a qualitative approach. The integrative review seeks to gather and analyze the results of studies on a particular topic in question. With the main objective of exploring the theme, thus being able to contribute to science and encourage the execution of studies.⁽⁹⁾

Thus, qualitative research is seen as a study method that seeks to understand a certain action of human experience, being able to understand the perceptions and subjectivities of individuals.⁽¹⁰⁾

For the elaboration of the study on screen, a search protocol was prepared, containing the following steps: delimitation of the theme and the guiding question, search with inclusion and exclusion criteria of the proposed theme, thorough analysis of each study and finally, interpretation of all data obtained in the survey.

The collection of material for the preparation of the study was carried out between January and February 2022, in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO), Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS) and MEDLINE databases. The following descriptors were used: Spiritu-

ality (Espiritualidade); Nursing assistance (Assistência de enfermagem); Integrality in health; (Integralidade em saúde); Nursing theory (Teoria de enfermagem); Hospital Oncology Service (Serviço Hospitalar de Oncologia). Controlled descriptors were listed according to the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were also taken into account. So that the inclusion criteria consisted of articles that met the theme, were in Portuguese, English or Spanish and available in full. On the other hand, we opted for the exclusion of public notices, letters to the editor and expert opinion. The period of publication of the articles was not taken into account, in order to identify as many of them as possible. So that 08 studies were selected that addressed the subject in question.

RESULTS

Of the 43 studies surveyed in the online databases, only 08 studies corresponded to the theme addressed in the current manuscript. Of the 43 studies selected, only 11 had the potential to be included in the elaboration of the content. However, after a thorough analysis of the samples found, it was decided to use only 08 studies. Of the 11 studies collected, 03 of them discussed spirituality, but did not address the role of the nursing team in offering spiritual care and did not address Jean Watson's theory of human care. The selected data were arranged in a chronological order between 2015 and 2021. The publication selection process is shown in Figure 1.

With the search carried out in the online databases, 08 studies were selected for the elaboration of the integrative review in question. The material found was listed and organized in a table, for better visualization of the readers. Thus, the table contains the following information: authors and year of publication of the studies, title, type of study and the

main considerations of each manuscript (Table 1).

The selected samples were summarized and classified according to the criterion of meeting the thematic area of knowledge, contributing to a nursing care for cancer patients based on scientific evidence.

DISCUSSION

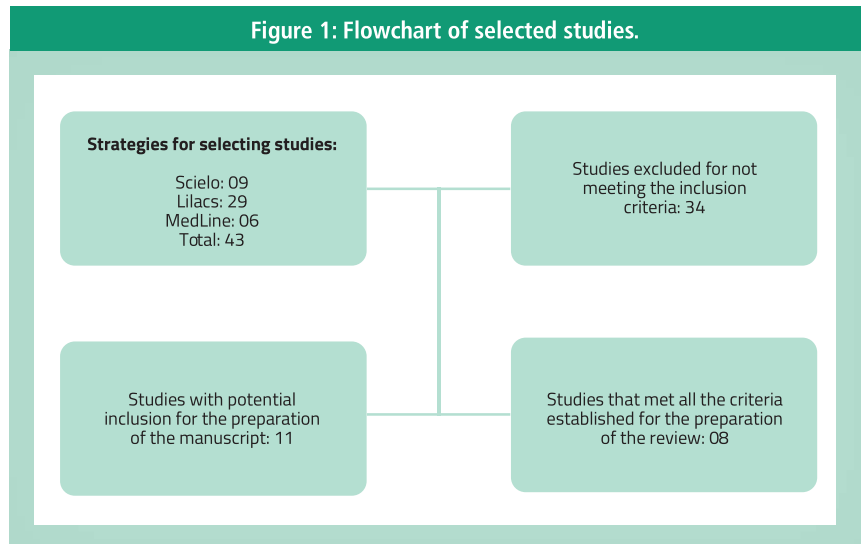
Spirituality has been seen as an important step that must be taken into account in the care process for cancer patients. In this same perspective, since 1988, the World Health Organization (WHO) has worked and sought to explore the topic. Bringing spiritual well-being as one of the main points to be healthy.⁽¹¹⁾

It is worth noting that spirituality differs from the term religiosity. While one seeks to understand and understand the meaning of life, of existence, on the other hand, the other is returning to a set of beliefs acquired in a certain group.⁽¹²⁾ In this way, spirituality is not based on religious practices, it is described as what drives life, involving the intimate values of each individual.⁽¹³⁾

Malignant neoplasms are still feared, even with advances in treatments provided by health services. The pathology still causes devastating effects, since, when diagnosed with the disease, many associate the idea of death and physical incapacity for certain activities. Thus, cancer brings numerous biological, psychological, social and spiritual maladjustments in individuals. Thus, religiosity and spirituality are points of support and overcoming used by cancer patients, so it is necessary that nursing is inserted in this reality, being able to use these two dimensions in care.⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁻¹⁶⁾

On the other hand, it is necessary to expose the emotional exhaustion on the part of health professionals who work directly with cancer patients. Accompanying the process of physical and

Figure 1: Flowchart of selected studies.



Source: Author, 2022

Table 1- Characterization of the studies used in the integrative review

Authors and year of publication	Title	Type of study	Main considerations
Soares MS, et al., 2021	The spirituality of oncology health professionals (A espiritualidade dos profissionais de saúde da Oncologia)	This is a quantitative, transversal and descriptive research	The study seeks to analyze the influence of spirituality in the work environment of nursing professionals. Thus, identifying a limited search by professionals for spiritual support.
Freitas RA, et al., 2019	Spirituality and religiosity in the experience of suffering, guilt and death of the elderly person with cancer (Espiritualidade e religiosidade no vivido do sofrimento, culpa e morte da pessoa idosa com câncer)	Qualitative research based on Viktor Frankl's Existential Analysis	The study shows that spirituality and religiosity are important points for cancer patients. Bringing comfort through the situation experienced.
Silva JO, et al., 2015	Spiritual dimension in the control of pain and suffering in patients with advanced cancer - Case report (Dimensão espiritual no controle da dor e sofrimento do paciente com câncer avançado. Relato de caso)	Case report	The study states that, in view of the case presented by the researchers, it was concluded that it is important to recognize the spiritual dimension in the adequate assessment of total pain, in cases that are refractory to pharmacological treatment.
Nascimento CL, et al., 2009	Spiritual care: an essential component of the pediatric nurse's practice in oncology (Cuidado espiritual: componente essencial da prática da enfermeira pediátrica na oncologia)	Reflection article	The article identified the importance of nurses' knowledge about the spirituality and religiosity of the patient and the family, so that they may be contributing to this health/disease process and assisting in the rehabilitation of this patient.
Pedrão RB; Beresin R, 2009	The nurse facing the issue of spirituality (O enfermeiro frente à questão da espiritualidade)	Exploratory and descriptive study	The study concluded the need to expand the theme in nursing courses.

mental suffering, witnessing countless situations of death, accompanying the long process of treatment and the suffering of the patient and family, make these professionals susceptible to feelings of impotence, sadness, anguish and guilt for not being able to alleviate the pain of the sick. In this scenario, spirituality is also used by professionals, who see it as an alternative to minimize all the difficulties encountered in the work environment, contributing to the acceptance and understanding of different situations and thus being able to offer humanized care to the patient. (17-18-19)

According to a study published in 2014, when spirituality is used as a strategy in patient care, approaching it individually, it can bring effective improvements in the psychological and spiritual well-being of individuals undergoing treatment. (20) In this way, nurses can use such a strategy to compose their nursing process and use counseling, strategy defined by the Classification of Nursing Interventions, as a point of support and support for patients who are in psychological and spiritual suffering and discomfort. (21)

In order to offer safe and qualified spiritual care to the patient and to better guide the nursing team to the exposed subject, knowing that nursing practices are based and grounded in scientific evidence, it is necessary to expose one of the nursing theories. The theory of Human Care, proposed by Jean Watson, highlights the Human Sciences, said by some authors that these aspects are almost never remembered by nurses. (22)

Watson understands that the effectiveness of care takes place in order to value dimensions that go beyond the concrete field, emphasizing the perception and subjectivity of the other. In search of the evolution of transpersonal care, the author creates the process called Clinical Caritas, which means treating with affection, nurturing, giving special attention, appreciating, being sensitive. Clinical Caritas is compo-

Saviato RM; Leão ER, 2016	Nursing Care and Jean Watson: A reflection on empathy (Assistência em Enfermagem e Jean Watson: Uma reflexão sobre a empatia)	Theoretical-reflective essay	The study effectively brings in nursing care the use of empathy with individuals who receive such assistance.
Zumstein-Shaha M, et al., 2020	Nurses' response to spiritual needs of cancer patients	Field research with a qualitative approach	The study comes to the conclusion that working on spirituality in patients is a very important point, as it leads the individual to acceptance.
Mendonça AB, et al., 2018	Counseling and spiritual assistance to patients undergoing chemotherapy: a reflection in the light of Jean Watson's Theory (Aconselhamento e assistência espiritual a pacientes em quimioterapia: uma reflexão à luz da Teoria de Jean Watson)	Theoretical reflection article	The methods applied to work on spirituality in patients are effective in care, bringing benefits to the individual.

Source: Author, 2022

sed of 10 elements of care, which are: practicing kindness and equanimity, including for oneself; being present and valuing the person's belief system; cultivate one's own spiritual practices, deepening individual knowledge; maintain authentic care through a helping-trusting relationship; support expression of positive and negative feelings; using knowledge and intuition creatively in problem solving; to truly bond in the teaching-learning experience; provide an environment of physical, emotional and spiritual restoration; promote alignment of body, mind and spirit to meet the needs of the individual; consider the spiritual and life and death aspects. (23)

In this perspective, Watson brings in his theory another very effective practice, empathy. The expression is defined as a relationship of help and trust between the professional and the patient. The theorist explains that when caring for someone it is possible to develop empathy and from there to know and understand the other, providing acceptance and understanding of the situation experienced. (7)

Watson, presents in his theory the interpersonal relationship between the nurse and the patient. The theorist discusses this relationship, when this in-

teraction is effective, what the author describes as CaringOcasión occurs. The same states that when this interaction is not explored, it is not just assistance provided to the patient. On the other hand, when this interaction deepens, it evolves into a transpersonal relationship, giving rise to what she calls ActualCaringOcasión. Thus forming a complete relationship, of knowledge on both sides, in a way that permeates care. (24)

According to what is discussed in the Caritas Process, it is necessary for individuals to cultivate their beliefs and execute what they believe in, so that they have the conviction that they can achieve healing. By delving deeper into the term spirituality and understanding it through ethnopsychology, it can be understood that spirituality is not just accepting the beliefs of the other individual, but developing a relationship of trust with the other, leaving them free to express what they believe in. (25-26)

In order for the objectives proposed by transpersonal care to be achieved, it is essential to recognize the patient as an active being in the care process, with desires and expectations and with a previous life history. Therefore, for this recognition to occur, it is necessary that

the assistance offered goes beyond the execution of tasks and technical procedures related to the disease.⁽¹⁾

In this same scenario, it is worth emphasizing more strongly the important role played by the nursing team throughout the path taken by individuals with some type of neoplasm. Since these professionals not only assess the patient, but also the family, offering spiritual support to all involved.⁽²⁷⁻²⁸⁾ The literature shows that nurses feel insufficient to provide such care and that many feel uncomfortable talking to the patient or family about spiritual and religious beliefs.⁽²⁹⁾

The authors also point out that many health professionals, especially nurses, are not prepared to provide effective spiritual care. This fact can be linked to a deficit in the education received by these professionals. In this way, they have led many of these workers to provide ineffective spiritual assessment and assistance.⁽³⁰⁻³¹⁾

Because it is a subjectively measured dimension of care, it can be said that spiritual assistance differs from assistance to other aspects of health, since their identification arises through the evaluation of personal information provided by the individual through a dynamic resulting from the strengthening of the bond between patient and nurse. However, the absence of a standard that guides the professional in the identification of spiritual distress has motivated studies that seek evidence about strategies that allow the reliable identification of this dimension, even though it is a complex and abstract phenomenon, perceived subjectively.⁽⁸⁾

It is worth emphasizing that nursing has a human nature and, therefore, spiritual, moral and physical points cannot be excluded. Given this, they need to be recognized as a belief system. The same has always been linked to religious aspects, from the beginning. When caring for a given individual, the nurse establishes a transpersonal relationship, as

described by the theorist Jean Watson. This interaction established by the nurse seeks to protect, support, and help the other to find answers in the disease and in the entire situation experienced at that moment. Nursing professionals need to cast a welcoming look towards their patients, based on humanization and seeking to understand the entire



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context in which the family and the patient are inserted. Remembering that the family also suffers from the relative's scenario, thus needing love and care from professionals who are on the front line of care.⁽³²⁾

Through such considerations, the nursing team, especially the nurse, can, from the first contact with the patient, include spirituality in all care provided. For an adequate and effective intervention, the nurse must be attentive from

the first contact with the patient, using communication as a support tool to understand the spiritual dimension of the individual and thus formulate a nursing process that will meet all the patient's needs, aiming at an effective spiritual care.⁽³³⁾

CONCLUSION

Providing well-being to cancer patients and their families is a role of nursing. Spirituality and religion are seen by many as a form of comfort and a point of support for facing different adverse situations, such as the illness process. A health team, especially nursing professionals, who are well prepared and aware of such practices, can be of paramount importance to help these individuals in such challenging moments they experience.

However, it is worth remembering that according to the data from the studies, it is possible to perceive the lack of preparation of professionals and that many do not feel capable of working on the spiritual side of patients and families. There are many difficulties encountered by these professionals to work on the issue in care. They feel limited and insecure, reporting that they do not have enough knowledge to put the question addressed into practice.

It is worth noting that this issue reported in the studies leads us to think that the training offered to nursing professionals is somehow insufficient, leaving gaps in the assistance of these professionals to individuals who seek health systems. Cancer brings many challenges to patients and family members, thus, an attentive and qualified nursing team is necessary to be able to identify the needs of these individuals and be able to act effectively in this spiritual dimension. Being able to exercise the principles of the Theory of Human Care and help patients and families to re-signify all the realities experienced.

The term spiritual care has gained

great notoriety in the field of research, but much remains to be researched on the subject. Through the searches, little was found in the databases of studies that relate the theme of spiritual care,

nursing and cancer patients. Thus, it is concluded that the topic needs to be more widespread in the field of science and research.

Finally, it is understood that the the-

ory proposed by Jean Watson contributes to a more coherent and complete nursing care. Given the importance of spiritual care in the context of cancer patient care. 🌱

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