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# Care of pregnant women in primary health care by nursing during the SARS-COV-2 pandemic

**ABSTRACT** | Objective: Describe the role of nurses in carrying out prenatal consultations during the pandemic within the scope of Primary the Health Care. Method: Descriptive study, an experience report. The same occurred in the period from March 2020 until June 2020 in the micro-region of the Sertões de Crateús, Ceara. Results: The nursing professional plays an important role in guiding the entire population, especially pregnant women, who are at risk and are still attending the unit with certain frequency. Under this bias, health education in times of pandemic has focused on preventive measures against the SARS-Cov-2 virus. Conclusion: In this way, the strategy used qualifies as a useful instrument with easy access and that generates impacts on the population. Enabling a continuous intervention in patient care, with regard to prenatal care, the spread of knowledge, acts in a way to promote health and prevent injuries.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus Infections; Health Education; Prenatal Care.

**RESUMEN** | Objetivo: Describir la función del enfermero en la realización de consultas prenatales durante la pandemia en el contexto de la Atención Primaria de Salud. Método: Estudio descriptivo, relato de experiencia. Ocurrió en el período de marzo de 2020 a junio de 2020 en la microrregión de Sertões de Crateús, Ceará. Resultados: El profesional de enfermería desarrolla un papel importante en la orientación de toda la población, especialmente las mujeres embarazadas, que se encuentran en riesgo y aún asisten a la unidad con cierta frecuencia. Bajo este sesgo, la educación sanitaria en tiempos de pandemia se ha centrado en medidas preventivas contra el virus SARS-Cov-2. Conclusión: De esta manera, la estrategia utilizada califica como un instrumento útil, de fácil acceso y que genera impactos en la población. Permitir una intervención continua en la atención de las pacientes, en lo que respecta a la atención prenatal, la difusión del conocimiento, actúa con el fin de promover la salud y prevenir lesiones. **Palabras claves:** Infecciones por Coronavirus; Educación en Salud; Atención Prenatal.

**RESUMO** | Objetivo: Descrever o papel do enfermeiro na realização de consultas pré-natal durante a pandemia no âmbito da Atenção Primária a Saúde. Método: Estudo descritivo, do tipo relato de experiência. O mesmo ocorreu no período de março de 2020 até junho 2020 na microrregião dos Sertões de Crateús, Ceará. Resultados: O profissional de enfermagem desenvolve o importante papel de orientar toda a população, em especial as gestantes, que são grupo de risco e ainda estão frequentando a unidade com certa periodicidade. Sob esse viés a educação em saúde em tempos de pandemia tem focado em medidas de prevenção contra o vírus SARS-Cov-2. Conclusão: Dessa maneira, a estratégia utilizada qualifica-se como um instrumento útil de fácil acesso e que gera impactos na população. Possibilitando uma intervenção continua no cuidado aos pacientes, no que tange ao atendimento pré-natal, a propagação de conhecimentos, age de modo a promover saúde e prevenir agravos. **Palavras-chaves:** Infecções por Coronavirus; Educação em Saúde; Cuidado Pré-natal.

## Mirelly Shatilla Misquita

Undergraduate, Student at Faculdade Princesa do Oeste.  
ORCID: 0000-0001-7097-8651

## Patrícia Gomes da Silva

Undergraduate, Student at Faculdade Princesa do Oeste.  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1843-4339

## Geovana de Abreu Braz

Undergraduate, Student at Faculdade Princesa do Oeste.  
ORCID: 0000-0002-2337-8044

## Anna Beatriz de Almeida Gomes Sousa

Undergraduate, Student at Faculdade Princesa do Oeste.  
ORCID: 0000-0001-8790-8895

## Dilene Fontele Catunda Melo

Nurse. Master, Professor at Faculdade Princesa do Oeste.  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9525-9389

## Francisca Nellie de Paula Melo

Nurse. PhD. Professor at Faculdade Princesa do Oeste (FPO).  
ORCID: 0000-0002-9622-7669

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## INTRODUCTION

Primary health care (PHC) according to the National Primary Care Policy is described by a set of health actions, at the individual and collective levels. It incorporates health promotion and protection, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction and health maintenance. Having the objective of developing comprehensive care that generates impacts on the health and autonomy of the people registered by the unit and on

the determinants and conditions of collective health.<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus, PHC can be characterized as the gateway to the Unified Health System. In this context evidenced above and in the midst of the current pandemic, these units operate in a continuous and integrated way in the care of patients with COVID-19.

In view of the current global scenario, with the pathology pandemic caused by the new coronavirus, COVID-19, health professionals encounter one of the greatest challenges in professional practice, health education.<sup>(2)</sup>

The pathology resulting from infection with the new coronavirus of severe acute respiratory syndrome 2 (SARS-COV-2), designated COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) first identified in humans in December 2019,

in Wuhan City, in China. On January 30th, 2020, WHO declared a state of emergency in Public Health at the international level, on March 11th it was declared a Pandemic.

The symptoms and the development of the infection were initially compared to those of the flu, but they could progress to a severe acute infection with pneumonia and require intensive care for 1 to 5% of those infected. <sup>(3)</sup>

The main routes of transmission include: droplets of secretions from the respiratory tract of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals, and objects that may be contaminated by them. <sup>(4)</sup>

In view of the lack of knowledge about the possible consequences of SARS-CoV-2 during pregnancy, studies initially analyzed that the number of infected pregnant women was lower than the general population, however, in the case of being infected, they were more vulnerable to more aggressive manifestations of the infection. <sup>(5-6)</sup>

In March 2020, the Ministry of Health (MH) of Brazil included pregnant women as a group at risk for COVID-19, based on physiological changes in pregnancy, which tend to lead to problems in cases of infection, related to low tolerance to hypoxia observed within this population. <sup>(7)</sup>

In view of this aspect, although the precautionary measure of the national health agencies is sensible, it is known that there is little scientific research that permeates the new pathology in relation to its management of pregnant women positive for SARS-Cov-2 or suspected cases of infection. <sup>(8)</sup>

In this context, professionals are not only concerned with the advancement of pathology, but also with the difficulty and resistance of adopting simple health care measures, among which can be mentioned those that are related to preventing and fighting the disease. In addition, professionals still have to deal with the so-called Fake News, which hinders the teaching-learning process and is a barrier

for health professionals. <sup>(9)</sup>

The nurse as the unit manager, plays a fundamental role in guiding families and the community in terms of promotion, protection, prevention of diseases and diagnoses.

Thus, understanding the role of these professionals in coping with the pandemic becomes essential. Therefore, this study aims to describe the nurse's work in carrying out prenatal consultations during the pandemic within the scope of Primary Health Care.

#### METHOD

This is a descriptive study, an experience report. This study reports the dynamics of nurses in a primary health care unit (PHC) from March 2020 to June 2020 in the micro region of the Sertões de Cra-teús, Ceará.

Active teaching methodologies were used, so that knowledge was passed on across the board, where patients could express their doubts and list situations experienced in their daily lives.

The place for carrying out the activities was at the reception of the unit, in that place it comprises a large, airy space with ambient lighting. Those present were arranged with a minimum distance of five feet between one patient and another. The action was performed before the prenatal consultation and took an average of 30 minutes to 1 hour.

To facilitate understanding, posters and illustrations were used in addition to accessible and understandable speech. The subjects were approached and chosen in advance and the best strategy for working on the subject was programmed.

The research has as population 52 pregnant women who are attended at the unit per month. Around ten patients participated each week, pregnant women who attended after prenatal consultations and spontaneous demands that were present were invited to participate.

The moment was led by two nurses with the support of 6 nursing students,

who helped and failed the discussion. Mediation took place horizontally, where the exchange of knowledge was encouraged.

As preventive measures, everyone present at the unit wore masks. Since professionals use surgical masks, patients could use tissue masks or any other model of mask that offers protection.

#### RESULTS

In PHC, nurses are responsible for collecting patient data and detecting suspicious cases and confirming them through rapid testing and evaluation of clinical criteria. The process is carried out in a private room where, after performing this screening, if the patient is symptomatic, he must perform the rapid test seven days after the onset of symptoms.

With the presence of symptomatology or positive rapid test, notification already occurs, and the patient is instructed to perform home treatment and is directed to the hospital unit if he needs specialized care. When the patient is not hospitalized, the telemedicine team in the municipality monitors that patient through virtual media.

In addition to the nurse's role in the early capture of the suspected and confirmed patient of COVID-19, the professional also plays an important role in guiding the entire population, especially pregnant women, who fall into the risk group and are still attending the unit with certain periodicity.

Health education in times of pandemic has focused on preventive measures against the SARS-Cov-2 virus, in which the nurse, along with other members of the PHC, provides guidance on subjects such as: correct hand hygiene, the correct use of gel alcohol, frequency of cleaning, how to wash food correctly, how to use tissue masks correctly and how to handle it correctly, symptoms that a SARS-CoV-2 infected patient may have, in addition to answering other questions that may arise during the moment.

Health education takes place in such a way that the participants are at a safe distance, all properly attired and following the rules of respiratory etiquette and the service manuals of the National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA).

## DISCUSSION

Prenatal care plays a fundamental role in the prevention and early detection of pathologies for mothers and babies, in order to provide healthy development for the fetus and reduce risks for pregnant women.

It is emphasized the importance of health professionals to assure women about the right to humanized care during pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium. Provided by the Network of Attention to Maternal and Child Health, known as Rede Cegonha, instituted by Decree No. 1459/2011. <sup>(10)</sup>

Priority care for pregnant women originates from characteristics related to pregnancy, where changes in metabolism and immune systems adapt to pregnancy. <sup>(4)</sup>

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is extremely serious, highly contagious and has reached the world population beyond risk groups. Thus, the importance of raising awareness and sensitizing the population about its seriousness is emphasized in order to reinforce preventive measures in order to reduce and control the pathology. <sup>(4,11)</sup>

Health is a universal right, health promotion through educational practices is an indispensable tool that must be used, even in times of pandemic, it is an indispensable alternative to promote health despite the difficulties encountered in working in current and the early identification of pregnant women is extremely important.

Palácio & Takenami cite in their studies that educational practices need to encompass knowledge on both sides, health and education so that care actions are successful here includes prevention,

protection, promotion, rehabilitation, palliative care and not just the cure of diseases. <sup>(2)</sup>

It is well known that health education actions carried out by nurses are essential to make the population aware of basic hygiene care, as well as the mandatory use of masks, so that they can stop the spread of the new coronavirus.

Information on the different themes and experiences, when exchanged between health professionals and women, enables the exchange of experiences and knowledge, being characterized by the Ministry of Health as the best way to promote understanding of the pregnancy process. <sup>(12)</sup>

Mascarenhas stresses in his research the importance of continued care for pregnant women during the pandemic. Therefore, health professionals must ensure that their humanized care will be continued in order to assist pregnant women during prenatal, delivery and puerperium. As well as the baby's childcare, which will monitor its growth and development. <sup>(8)</sup>

Pregnant women with covid-19 are more likely to experience fetal distress and/or preterm birth. Although there are no studies to prove the susceptibility, the Ministry of Health recommends pregnant women and puerperal women as a risk group because during the pregnancy and postpartum phase the woman has her immune system physiologically altered, causing illness by the virus. <sup>(13-14)</sup>

Studies indicate that COVID-19 infection in pregnant women tends to have negative outcomes, such as: spontaneous abortion; premature rupture of membranes; intrauterine growth restriction; fetal distress, labor and premature birth. <sup>(15,16,17,18,19)</sup>

In this context, the essential role of prenatal care during pregnancy and health education is highlighted, with a focus on measures to prevent the SARS-CoV-2 virus, especially during the third trimester of pregnancy, when the final stages of development occur and a higher level of

maternal anxiety. <sup>(15)</sup>

The WHO recommends that the general population be educated about the seriousness surrounding COVID-19 and the role of the individual in preventing the spread of the pathology. <sup>(20)</sup>

When it comes to diagnosis, research indicates the need to promote early detection. For this, it is recommended that pregnant women know how to identify specific signs of COVID-19, in order to reduce their exposure to health services. <sup>(21)</sup>

National Health Surveillance Agency published on January 30, 2020, technical note No. 04/2020, which discusses guidelines for health services; disclosing prevention and control measures that should be adopted when assisting suspected or confirmed cases of infection with the new coronavirus. <sup>(22)</sup>

The importance of using the prevention and control measures of COVID-19 during health education is emphasized and promoting its dissemination to those present in order to break the chain of transmission of the new coronavirus.

Care, within this perspective, is inseparable from the notion of integrality, characterized by the act of welcoming, respecting, treating and caring for the patient. The use of light technologies in the face of the pandemic contributes to the production of care based on the user's understanding of its uniqueness. <sup>(23)</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The prenatal consultation performed by the nurse during a pandemic is essential, especially when using health education that qualifies as a useful tool with easy access and that generates impacts on the population, being a strategy used by health professionals to spread knowledge of health.

With light methodologies, accessible language and working with themes according to the Ministry of Health, professionals are able to impact the community in a positive way, spreading truthful infor-

mation and solving possible doubts that may arise among viewers.

Thus, it is concluded that this tool is of great importance and easy to apply, generating satisfactory impacts and ena-

bling an exchange of knowledge between patients and professionals, stimulating the link between the community and the PHC team.

Thus, providing a continuous inter-

vention in patient care, with regard to prenatal care, which involves patients in the group at risk for COVID-19, the spread of knowledge, acts in order to promote health and prevent possible problems. 🐦

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