

## PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE WORK OF THE NURSING TEAM IN ADULT EMERGENCY HOSPITAL SERVICE

PERCEPÇÕES SOBRE O TRABALHO DA EQUIPE DE ENFERMAGEM EM SERVIÇO HOSPITALAR DE EMERGÊNCIA DE ADULTOS

PERCEPCIÓN SOBRE EL TRABAJO DEL PERSONAL DE ENFERMERÍA EN EL SERVICIO HOSPITALARIO DE EMERGENCIAS PARA ADULTOS

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To study the perception of Nursing professionals of an Urgency and Emergency about teamwork, situations of care to critical patients and the physical environment of the Unit. **Methods:** Exploratory and qualitative descriptive study using a semi-structured interview with nurses in an Urgency and emergency unit for data collection. **Results:** Twenty-eight nurses were interviewed, being 24 Nursing Technicians and four Nurses. Three categories emerged: team work dynamics; interaction of the Nursing team; and physical and psychological aspects of the team. **Conclusion:** We observed that professionals considered themselves a united and collaborative team despite the occurrence of conflicts and the influence of the physical environment on teamwork, as well as identified stressors in the Nursing work that act on them as individuals.

**Keywords:** Nursing, Team Staff; Emergency Service, Hospital; Emergency Nursing.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** conhecer a percepção dos profissionais que integram a equipe de Enfermagem da Unidade de Urgência e Emergência de Adultos sobre o trabalho em equipe, situações de cuidado ao paciente crítico e ambiente físico. **Métodos:** estudo descritivo e exploratório de natureza qualitativa. Para a coleta de dados utilizou-se um formulário semiestruturado. Estudo realizado com profissionais de Enfermagem em um serviço hospitalar de emergência de adultos. **Resultados:** foram entrevistados 28 profissionais de Enfermagem, sendo 24 Técnicos de Enfermagem e quatro Enfermeiros. Surgiram três categorias: interação da equipe de Enfermagem, dinâmica do trabalho da equipe de Enfermagem, aspectos físicos e psicológicos da equipe. **Conclusão:** os profissionais consideraram a equipe unida e colaborativa apesar dos conflitos vivenciados e a influência do ambiente físico no trabalho em equipe; assim como identificação de aspectos estressores na Enfermagem que agem sobre o indivíduo.

**Palavras-chave:** Equipe de Enfermagem; Serviço Hospitalar de Emergência; Enfermagem em Emergência.

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** conocer la percepción del personal de enfermería del servicio de emergencias para adultos sobre el trabajo en equipo, la atención al paciente en estado crítico y sobre el ambiente físico. **Métodos:** estudio cualitativo exploratorio descriptivo. La recogida de datos se llevó a cabo por medio de un formulario semiestructurado. Estudio realizado con enfermeras de un servicio hospitalario de emergencias para adultos. **Resultados:** se entrevistaron a 28 profesionales: 24 técnicos de enfermería y cuatro enfermeros. Se establecieron tres categorías: interacción del equipo de enfermeros; dinámica de trabajo del equipo de enfermería y aspectos físicos y psicológicos del equipo. **Conclusión:** los profesionales consideraron que el equipo era unido y colaborativo, a pesar de los conflictos y de la influencia del entorno físico en el trabajo en equipo, así como la identificación de factores de estrés en enfermería que influyen en el individuo.

**Palabras clave:** Grupo de Enfermería; Servicio de Urgencia en Hospital; Enfermería de Emergencias.

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## INTRODUCTION

Urgency and emergency units are hospital sectors that involve exhausting, fast and accurate procedures of the health team, for comfort and relief to patients and their families. This results in physical and mental wear of the professionals who work there. The hospital environment itself can be considered a stressor, since it has more unsanitary conditions and dangerousness than other types of services that are provided by these professionals.<sup>1,2</sup>

Nursing teams acting in urgency and emergency units need skills such as agility of thought and ability to solve imminent problems. They are work environments in which time is limited, activities are intense, and the clinical situation of patients requires, in most cases, quick actions so as to avoid the risks of impending death or serious complications, for which reason the sector provides highly complex assistance and has an intense pace of activities, and flow of professionals and users.<sup>3</sup>

The Nursing team is effectively involved in Urgency and Emergency services and has to deal with situations that involve life, illness and death. Therefore, this profession has a high level of involvement with clients, what triggers anxiety, physical and psychological tension. These states, together with poor working conditions, may reflect negatively on the actions developed by the team.<sup>4,5</sup>

Originally the word team is associated with the accomplishment of labor services performed by individuals who seek common goals. The more technical conceptualization of teamwork is the valorization of the set of assignments, tasks or activities in the different work processes, based on the knowledge about the work of the other, building collective consensus and results.<sup>6</sup>

Teamwork is a driving force for change, and it is one of the forms of work that has greatly contributed to the development of the process of improving the quality of the institutions. It emerges as a possibility to reorganize the work and promote the quality of services.<sup>7,8</sup>

Teamwork is considered an alternative to achieve effective results, promote quality assistance. It is one of the multiple drivers of possible transformations in this field. Teamwork is regarded, according to its own characteristics and nature, as susceptible to occupational stress, although this phenomenon is observed even in workers that are not assigned to critical care areas.<sup>7,9</sup>

Knowledge of the factors that hamper the performance of teams is essential to detect conflicting points, and aspects that restrain quality of the actions of health care, as well as those that enhance them but are not properly valued.<sup>3,9</sup>

In view of the above, we deemed important to know the perception of Nursing professionals about the teamwork in an Urgency and Emergency unit of a federal public hospital, dealing with situations of care to critical patients and the physical environment.

The relevance of this study comes from the fact that the literature focusing on teamwork particularly in these units, from the perspective proposed in the present research, is scarce.

## METHOD

This is an exploratory and qualitative descriptive study, developed in an Adult Emergency Unit (AEU) of a teaching hospital in a municipality in the State of Minas Gerais, MG.

Inclusion criteria of subjects in the research were: to be a member of the Nursing team of this unit for more than a year and to be working at the time of data collection. Individuals who did not perform their work activities in the unit or were not part of the selected professional categories were excluded from the study.

The number of participants was 28, determined by data saturation, which allows a more detailed analysis of the relations established in the research environment and the understanding of meanings, symbolic and classification systems, codes, practices, values, attitudes, ideas and feelings.<sup>10</sup>

Data were collected by semi-structured interviews with the following research question: "How do you perceive the work of the Nursing team in the emergency room? Why?"

The interviews were recorded, made available in digital files and transcribed verbatim; interviews had an average duration of 30 to 50 minutes. The Content Analysis framework was used to analyze data, based on the following steps: pre-analysis, material exploration, treatment of results and inference and interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

The data were extracted from the reading and attentive re-reading of the speeches obtained in the interviews, identifying the units of meaning, and codifying information based on their relation with the objectives of the study. In the last step, the speeches were categorized, based on the classification of the elements according to their similarities and differences, with later regrouping based on common characteristics, giving origin to the thematic categories pertinent to the objectives of the study.<sup>11</sup>

The following codes were used for categorization: brackets ([...]) when a speech fragment was deleted and quotation marks ("...") to illustrate the pauses that occurred during the interview. The anonymity of the deponents was respected, and they are identified by the letters "Nur" for nurses, "Tc" for technicians, followed by a number indicating the order of interview (Nur1, Tc2...).

The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of the Triângulo Mineiro under Opinion nº 1994/11, in compliance with Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council. The participants who agreed to participate in the study signed the Informed Consent Form presented before the interviews.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty-eight professionals of the Nursing team participated in the study, being four Nurses and 24 Nursing Technicians. There was a predominance of females, with 19 (67.9%) participants. The predominant age group was 25-35 years, with 12 (42.81%) subjects, indicating a relatively young Nursing team.

Regarding the time elapsed after obtaining the degree, 13 (46.4%) subjects had completed training six to ten years ago. Regarding schooling, the secondary education prevailed, with 15 (53.7%) professionals.

In relation to time working in the service, 17 (60.7%) professionals had been working for one to five years in the area. Considering the working hours regime, ten (35.7%) professionals are federal employees and 18 (64.3%) follow the Brazilian Labor Law Consolidation (CLT) regime. It is worth mentioning that nine (32.1%) of these workers have a double working day.

Regarding the assignment to work in urgency and emergency units, 14 (50%) were there by personal choice. Regarding the participation in training courses, 22 (78.5%) subjects reported having done some type of training to act in the area of urgency and emergency care.

The analysis of the speeches culminated in the identification of three thematic categories: team work dynamics; interaction of the Nursing team; and physical and psychological aspects of the team.

## TEAMWORK DYNAMICS

For the subjects, the teamwork dynamics is characterized by the synchronism in the care, in which each professional plays a role in the care provided to the patient, based on the sharing of responsibilities to meet the clients' needs, as can be observed in the speeches.

*In my team, the service is synchronized (Nur 1).*

*Each one has a position, in this case, right? Each one develops a technique, a care. So that we assist the patient as a whole, in a humanized manner [...] we give, working as a team, we give the conditions to assist the patient in the way that he needs (Nur 1).*

The Nursing team values their preparation to act in Urgency and Emergency situations and recognizes that, in situations of critical patients, the coordinated work of the professionals is fundamental for an effective assistance.

*There is a need to be well synchronized, because in urgent care, you need speed, and each member needs to know exactly what to do, without wasting time (Tc 21).*

This fact corroborates studies carried out with nursing technicians and assistants that emphasized the importance of coordinated actions of Urgency and Emergency teams for promptly responding to the care needed by the patients.<sup>12-15</sup>

These service units have active dynamics and recognition and appreciation of teamwork represent one of the main tools to make the work process feasible.<sup>5,16-18</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that there is a shortage of time and resources in critical care units, and the demand implied by the need for immediate and accurate assistance generates a climate of tension and intra and interpersonal conflicts. They offer one of the most aggressive and tense environments in the hospital, where stress stands out as a determinant of the quality of life of Nursing workers.<sup>19</sup>

## INTERACTION OF THE NURSING TEAM

This category indicates that there is union and cooperation between professionals in the daily practice of the Nursing team, and the interaction among workers is fundamental for the effective care, as expressed in the speeches:

*We always work well together and we have a good interaction in the care, mainly, as we are well familiarized with critical patients, both in emergency and patients in the wards, who are very serious patients, we have a good conduct (Tc13).*

*Yes, there is interaction. We always help each other. If one is in need, the other strives and helps. There is no such thing as my patient and your patient. Whenever someone is in need, the others help (Tc10).*

In this sense, the interaction is recognized as actions and relationships among the members of a team manifested by attitudes of reciprocity. Thus, the interaction between the members of the Nursing team favors the development of an effective assistance.

The National Humanization Policy highlights the importance of interaction among Nursing professionals, being considered a challenge to be faced by the team, either because of the need to produce qualified care or because of the respect for the singularities of each of the subjects involved in the care.<sup>20</sup>

The collaborative practice began to be recognized as a form of work organization since the 1950s in the Nursing work process, corroborating studies on this theme that record that the dialogic communication enables professionals to develop collaborative attitudes.<sup>21,22</sup>

The interaction between team members can be manifested as collaborative actions through the integration among professionals, showing that this condition is paramount for the development of the activities of the Nursing team and improvement of actions focused on safety and quality of the assistance provided.<sup>12-14</sup>

The interactions between team members in the daily work can trigger the emergence of conflicts. Conflicts can express positive or negative meanings, depending on how they occur and are managed. In order to avoid conflicting situations, understanding and respect for the technical or emotional limitations of team members is fundamental.<sup>22</sup>

Conflict management in these relationships can also promote change, creativity, and combat conformism. The speeches indicate that conflicts exist, but the participants believe that union in the team, focused in the assistance to the patient, can surpass them.<sup>2,5,16</sup>

*Yes, there is a lot of interaction! From the moment we say: "– let's do it!"; the patient arrives, like this [...] You have to give the care, medication, everything [...] We are a united team, we have a lot of interaction. If there are conflicts? There is always conflict, because working as a team is not easy [...] (Tc 3).*

The constant presence of Nursing in health institutions makes it susceptible to conflicting situations, because the context and nature of the work are often complex and stressful, as they involve life and death, power and submission relationships. Therefore, it is important to deal with these situations in order to maintain the quality of care and hospital organization.<sup>17</sup>

In a study carried out in an emergency unit of the public network in the south of the country, it was observed that the perception of union and cooperation between the members of the Nursing team generates job satisfaction in this work environment. It is necessary to give space for collective moments of reflection with the purpose of promoting integration and harmonization.<sup>18</sup>

## PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE TEAM

The professionals of the Nursing team said that they may be subject to physical consequences caused by the working conditions, such as environment and lack of equipment, and psychological consequences, such as anxiety, stress and frustration, which may impair work and care relationships.

*It is like this – "If I were like this, I would have done that..." "if the equipment were near the infirmary, the bathroom, that patient would have people closer to him", thus, it is like this, we get a bit frustrated. As it happened today, there are 20 or so patients for two technicians, this is not good for the patient, neither for our own psychological state [...] (Tc 25).*

*[...] so, the environment is not adequate! It has negative effects on the physical part, because we start to feel pain in*

*the back, because of the position [...] so, in physical terms, we start wearing, we feel a lot of pain, and psychologically [...] because you do not have a proper structure, these stretchers in the corridors [...] want it or not, this increases our anxiety, stress, nervousness, then, all of this causes us harm too! Both, physically and mentally [...] (Nur 3).*

One study reinforces the idea that it is essential to be attentive to professionals who assist critically ill patients because they are given the responsibility of providing care with quality and safety. Therefore, it is suggested to create a favorable environment, with alternative spaces that may promote moments of relaxation of the Nursing team as a way of relieving the stress-generating situations resulting from the work in these units.<sup>19</sup>

A significant number of Nursing professionals are affected by diseases in their work activity. These professionals are constantly exposed to several risk factors for the development of occupational diseases, such as stress syndromes and *Burnout*.

These factors can be physical, chemical, mechanical, biological, ergonomic or psychosocial, thus evidencing the need to create strategies directed to these professionals in order to prevent the emergence of these occupational diseases.<sup>23</sup>

The infrastructure of the studied sector was evaluated by the research subjects as inadequate and considered an aspect that hinders the teamwork, because the lack of adequate materials, space and conditions negatively influence the assistance.

Another point highlighted was that the lack of working conditions, such as the routine of the service and the difficulties to execute the assistance, permeated by the inadequacy of the physical environment, can cause physical and psychological problems to the workers.

Studies also indicate that other important factors, such as the shortage of professionals, the high work load, the short time available to complete the activities, lack of effective communication and the inadequate physical environment of the unit, have led to the emergence of physical and psychological problems among professionals. Inadequate working conditions make professionals more prone to frustration, dissatisfaction and suffering, which impairs the quality of care.<sup>5,9,18,24,25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study made it possible to record the inherent aspects that characterize the Nursing teamwork in this type of hospital environment. Among these aspects were observed the importance of working environment conditions for improving the care and the consequences for health professionals. In the studied team, the articulation between the actions in the work process was evident, mainly reflected in the synchronism between the members regarding the responsibility of provid-

ing care to critical patients, in order to produce optimal results of the interventions in a coordinated manner, essential for effective assistance.

As for interaction, the respondents emphasized the complexity of human relationships. The interviewees considered the team united and described a positive attitude in the work environment, but they recognize the existence of conflicting situations. Situations of conflict, in the view of the subjects, comes from the interaction between different persons in the work environment, being necessary the commitment of all parties so that this conviviality may take place in the most harmonious possible manner.

Regarding the physical and psychological aspects of the team, the participants emphasized that the physical structure, particularly lack of equipment, is a source of anxiety, stress and frustration, and can affect relationships in the work and care provision. In this sense, the need of attention on the part of managers to develop strategies that reorganize the work process of emergency services in hospitals is noticeable.

The results of this study should be carefully examined because they are based on a qualitative analysis of heterogeneous cases and are not generalizable, requiring reexamination in future researches on the theme. These issues deserve to be better explored in future studies, on this important topic, since they are significantly present in the reality of Nursing professionals who work in critical care units.

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