






ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF HEALTH PROTOCOL BASED ON RODGERS' EVOLUTIONARY METHOD

ANÁLISE DE CONCEITO DE PROTOCOLO EM SAÚDE À LUZ DO MÉTODO EVOLUCIONÁRIO DE RODGERS

ANÁLISIS DEL CONCEPTO DE PROTOCOLO DE SALUD A LA LUZ DEL MÉTODO EVOLUTIVO DE RODGERS

-  Renilly de Melo Paiva¹
-  Flávia Tavares Barreto Chivavone¹
-  Manáces dos Santos Bezerril¹
-  Larissa Arielly Cunha da Silva¹
-  Viviane Euzebia Pereira dos Santos¹

¹Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte - UFRN. Departamento de Enfermagem - DE. Natal, RN - Brazil.

Corresponding Author: Renilly de Melo Paiva

E-mail: renilly.melo@gmail.com

Author's contributions:

Conceptualization: Renilly M. Paiva, Viviane E. P. Santos; **Data Collection:** Renilly M. Paiva, Manáces S. Bezerril; **Investigation:** Renilly M. Paiva; **Methodology:** Renilly M. Paiva, Larissa A. C. Silva; **Project Management:** Viviane E. P. Santos; **Resources Management:** Viviane E. P. Santos; **Statistical Acquisition:** Renilly M. Paiva, Flávia T.B. Chivavone; **Supervision:** Viviane E. P. Santos; **Visualization:** Viviane E. P. Santos; **Writing – Original Draft Preparation:** Renilly M. Paiva; **Writing – Review and Editing:** Viviane E. P. Santos.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the concept of protocol in health using Rodgers' evolutionary method. **Method:** this is a conceptual analysis based on Rodgers' evolutionary model. Data collection was carried out in December 2021 in the following databases: CAPES Theses and Dissertations Portal, DART-Europe E-Theses Portal, Electronic Theses Online Service (ETHOS), Repositório Científico de Acesso Aberto de Portugal (RCAAP), and Theses Canada. The DeCS/MeSH descriptors "Protocolo/Protocol" and "Saúde/Health" were used. To analyze the studies, the year of publication, country of origin, concept, attributes, antecedents, consequents, substitute terms, and related concepts were evaluated. **Results:** in the antecedents and consequents, determining terms were identified for the construction of the concept related to health care, protection of professionals, and improvement of patient care. The attributes of the concept included academic and quality knowledge for patient care. **Conclusion:** the concept analyzed is comprehensive, involving substitute terms and concepts related to the practice and quality of health care, from which the definition of the concept of health protocol was developed.

Keywords: Guidelines as Subject; Health; Patient Safety; Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar o conceito de protocolo em saúde utilizando o método evolucionário de Rodgers. **Método:** trata-se de uma análise conceitual baseada no modelo evolucionário de Rodgers. A coleta de dados foi realizada em dezembro de 2021 nas seguintes bases: Portal de Teses e Dissertações da CAPES, DART-Europe E-Theses Portal, Electronic Theses Online Service (ETHOS), Repositório Científico de Acesso Aberto de Portugal (RCAAP) e Theses Canada. Foram utilizados os descritores DeCS/MeSH "Protocolo/Protocol" e "Saúde/Health". Para análise dos estudos, avaliou-se o ano de publicação, o país de origem, o conceito, os atributos, os antecedentes, os consequentes, os termos substitutos e os conceitos relacionados. **Resultados:** nos antecedentes e consequentes foram identificados termos determinantes para a construção do conceito relacionados ao cuidado em saúde, proteção dos profissionais e melhoria da assistência ao paciente. Os atributos do conceito incluíam conhecimento acadêmico e de qualidade para atendimento ao paciente. **Conclusão:** o conceito analisado é abrangente, envolvendo termos substitutos e conceitos relacionados à prática e à qualidade da assistência à saúde, a partir dos quais foi desenvolvida a definição do conceito de protocolo em saúde.

Palavras-chave: Guias como Assunto; Saúde; Segurança do Paciente; Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar el concepto de protocolo de salud utilizando el método evolutivo de Rodgers. **Método:** se realizó un análisis de concepto utilizando el modelo evolutivo de Rodgers. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo en diciembre de 2021 en las siguientes bases de datos: Portal de tesis y disertaciones de CAPES, Portal de tesis electrónicas de DART-Europa, Servicio en línea de tesis electrónicas (ETHOS), Repositorio científico de acceso abierto de Portugal (RCAAP) y Tesis de Canadá, utilizando los descriptores MeSH "Protocol/Protocol" y "Saúde, Health". Para el análisis de los estudios se evaluaron el año de publicación, el país de origen, el concepto, los atributos, los antecedentes, los consecuentes, los términos sustitutivos y los conceptos relacionados. **Resultados:** en los antecedentes y consecuencias, se identificaron términos clave para la construcción del concepto relacionado con el cuidado de la salud, la protección de los profesionales de la salud y la mejora de la atención al paciente. Los atributos del concepto fueron el conocimiento académico y la calidad en la atención al paciente. **Conclusión:** se observa que el concepto estudiado es amplio, ya que involucra términos y conceptos sustitutivos relacionados con la práctica y la calidad de la atención en salud. A partir de estos, se desarrolló la definición del concepto de protocolo de salud.

Palabras clave: Guías como Asunto; Salud; Seguridad del Paciente; Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

Protocols are structured normative instruments that allow autonomous actions, used to assist in the care and patient safety (PS). They consist of specific standards and techniques that help structure and optimize the work and time of health professionals⁽¹⁻³⁾.

In this way, protocols offer advantages such as a broad view of the work process, the use of simple symbols, the definition of actions evaluated by professionals, and graphic presentations that facilitate understanding. Their use favors the qualification of care, avoids duplication of tasks, and allows the adaptation of evidence to the local and the user reality⁽⁴⁾.

This tool is considered a soft-hard technology, based on scientific evidence, which assists in health needs and allows the professional to be involved in the care, management, and health education process⁽⁵⁻⁷⁾. In addition, the creation and use of these protocols direct the routine practices and procedures of health services, such as the clinical protocol, which is aimed at promoting the user's health⁽⁸⁾.

There are numerous types of protocols, including clinical protocols and service organization protocols. These are sometimes confused with other terms, such as guidelines, checklists, standard operating procedures, flowcharts, and conduct guidelines. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the concept of a health protocol to facilitate understanding of its real meaning, allowing its appropriate use according to the context^(4,8,9).

The concept is an organized mental construction of a phenomenon, using terms that describe facts that occur in nature. These concepts allow individuals to describe situations and communicate effectively⁽¹⁰⁾.

Therefore, this study has the following guiding questions: How is the concept of health protocol addressed in scientific productions? What are the substitute terms and concepts related to the health protocol? The objective is to analyze the concept of health protocol using Rodgers' evolutionary method.

METHOD

This is a concept analysis using Rodgers' evolutionary model⁽¹¹⁾, which aims to present the temporal knowledge constructed on a given concept, in this study, the health protocol. Rodgers⁽¹¹⁾ describes six steps to achieve the proposed objective: I) define the concept of interest; II) select the field for data collection; III) highlight the attributes of the concept and contextual bases (antecedents and consequences); IV) analyze the characteristics

of the concept (substitute terms and related concepts); V) identify, if necessary, an example of a concept; and VI) determine the implications of the concept. Antecedents are events/phenomena that contributed to the emergence of the term, while consequences refer to the consequences after the application of the term. Substitute terms are words or expressions that replace the term, and related concepts refer to assumptions that formulate the meaning of the analyzed term.

Data collection was carried out in December 2021 in the following databases: CAPES Theses and Dissertations Portal, DART-Europe E-Theses Portal, Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS), Repositório Científico de Acesso Aberto de Portugal (RCAAP) and Theses Canada. The choice of theses and dissertations is because they have broad discussions on the concept investigated, providing a better contextualization of the concept addressed.

In the search fields, a combination of controlled descriptors was used, according to DeCS/MeSH: "Protocolo/Protocol" and "Saúde/Health". Since this is an evolutionary analysis of the concept, there was no temporal delimitation. Theses and dissertations published in full in Portuguese, Spanish, English, or French that addressed health protocols were included. Research in which only the abstract was available was excluded. The selection of studies followed three stages: identification of studies; evaluation of the title and abstract; and reading of the pre-selected research in full, in pairs (Figure 1). The study did not involve research with human beings and therefore did not require ethical assessment.

The titles and abstracts of the studies were read and analyzed by four reviewers, who performed the analysis in pairs, to identify those potentially eligible for the study. Each of the selected studies was read in full by two independent reviewers, aiming to confirm their permanence and, if so, to extract the data of interest.

RESULTS

Of the 39 (100.0%) studies analyzed that constitute the final sample, it was noted that the year with the most publications was 2016 with nine (23.1%), followed by 2018 with eight publications (20.5%). Brazil was the country with the most productions, with 36 (92.3%) studies (Figure 2).

Regarding the area of knowledge with the greatest representation, Nursing stood out, with 30 (76.9%) studies, followed by medicine and public health, with two (5.1%) studies each. At the academic level of the selected studies, the master's degree was predominant, with

20 (51.3%) studies, followed by the doctorate, with 13 (33.3%) studies. Regarding the populations studied in the theses and dissertations, professionals were more frequent, appearing in 30 (76.9%) studies, while patients were the focus in nine (23.1%) studies. More than one type of sample was present in some studies. Regarding the conceptual aspects, the main attributes, antecedents, and consequences of the concept of health protocol, indicated by the investigated studies, are presented in Table 1.

Regarding the substitute terms, the health protocol includes data collection instrument, technological tool, standard operating procedure, checklist, guidelines, practice guide, clinical practice guide, care protocol, service organization protocol, Nursing care protocol, care protocol, care organization protocol, clinical protocol, program, plan, and safe checklist. Regarding the similarity analysis, Figure 3 shows a summary of the most prominent words found in the concepts of the studies.

Figure 1 – Flowchart of research collection, Natal/RN, Brazil, 2023.

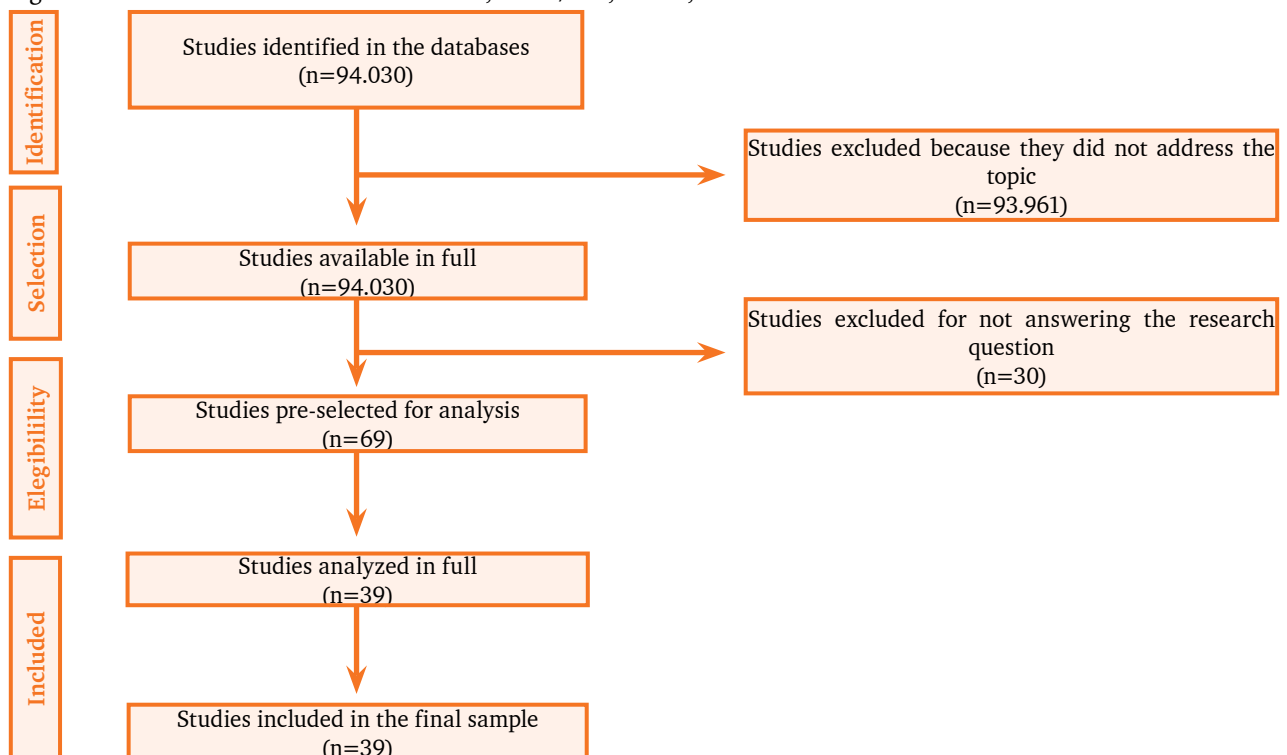


Figure 2 – Papers published by year related to the term health protocol, Natal/RN, Brazil, 2023.

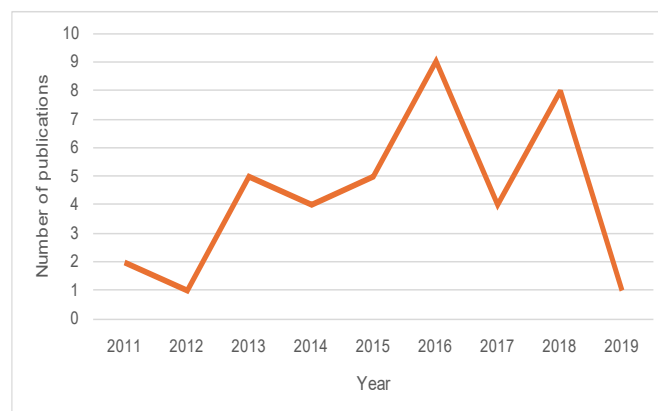


Table 1 – Antecedentes, consequentes, atributos e conceitos relacionados ao termo protocolo em saúde, Natal/RN, Brasil, 2023.

Conceptual Aspects	Description
Antecedents	Lack of clear guidelines Instrument for data collection composed of patient data Reality of adverse events in health services Demand for specific complex care for a certain contingent Construction of a common language among professionals Standardization of information and systematization of care Specific instruments to improve patient safety Health care based on scientific clinical evidence
Consequences	Qualification, organization, and optimization of care. Rationalization of care Standardization of conducts Improved planning and control of procedures Optimization of operational resources Cost reduction Reduction of hospitalization time and reduction of complication rates Guarantee of safe and quality practice Knowledge update tool Assist in the processes of evaluating Nursing care and patient safety
Attributes	Contributions to academic, systematized, and quality knowledge for patient care Guidance of care practice and routine procedures Prioritization of care Assistance in decision-making Safe care Safety culture Quality of data and information Cost-effectiveness of interventions
Related concepts	Rationalization of care Qualification of healthcare Health education Guidelines Quality indicators Evolution of the work process Systematization of care Promotion of user health Organization of the service Error prevention Classification of priorities Evaluation of effectiveness Clinical judgment in health Clinical practice Professional practice Standardization of health conduct Standardization of care practice Health recovery

DISCUSSION

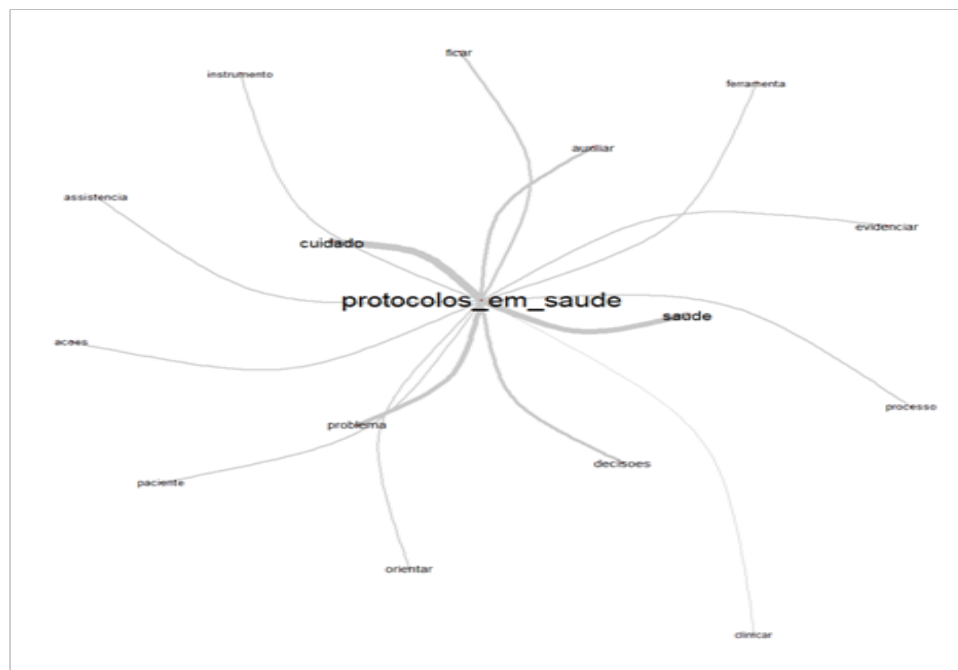
Data analysis showed that most of the theses and dissertations were developed in Brazil. This phenomenon is associated with the progressive growth in the use of measurement instruments in health practices and the objective of the implementation committee of the National Patient Safety Program, which aims to validate protocols, guides, and manuals related to Patient Safety⁽¹²⁾.

We observed that most publications were published in 2016, which is related to the emphasis on the insertion of technologies in Nursing, promoted by academic organizations, such as the American Nurses Association⁽¹³⁾. Regarding the area of knowledge, Nursing stands out. This predominance is because professionals in this area show greater adherence to the use of protocols during

patient care. This finding is in line with studies^(12,14-16) that emphasize the need to encourage the use of these tools by all health professionals. Resistance to the application of instruments prevents standardized care; therefore, the construction and validation of instruments that guide care practice express the development of health technologies for Nursing, which aids in care.

Among the levels of qualifications in which the materials were produced, the academic master's degree was greater than the doctorate. Studies^(17,18) show that the expansion of qualified postgraduate students contributes to scientific, cultural, technological, and social development. The first *stricto sensu* course in Nursing was a master's degree, which began in 1972. This course has

Figure 3 – Similarity analysis of the health protocol concept, Natal/RN, Brazil, 2023.



Source: research data.

grown over the years thus, in 2019, there were 76 master's degrees and only 40 doctorates, which demonstrates the advancement of these courses in postgraduate studies^(17,18).

Regarding the participants in the studies that make up the final sample, health professionals were the most prominent. This is because protocols are tools designed to assist in care, contributing to better health outcomes for the population. This finding corroborates studies^(14,15,19) that emphasize the importance of developing and using protocols to improve the quality of care and patient safety, enabling advances in the work process by promoting adequate care based on scientific evidence for establishing care and institutional goals.

In the analysis of the aspects of the concept, according to Rodgers' evolutionary model⁽¹¹⁾, which describes steps to achieve the proposed objective, we have the attributes of the concept and the contextual bases (antecedents and consequences), and the characteristics of the concept (substitute terms and related concepts).

In the antecedents, terms that are decisive for the construction of the concept of health protocol were pointed out. Health care based on clinical and scientific evidence stands out, which standardizes conduct, protects professionals providing care, and, consequently, improves patient care. These aspects are in line with studies^(9,19-21) that highlight the need to construct protocols based on scientific evidence, recommendations, and elements of

quality management for better planning, organization, and coordination of the proposed activities.

The lack of clear protocols or guidelines is a relevant factor for the emergence of the term “health protocol” and the need to develop this tool so that care is effective and of quality, providing support to the professionals responsible for patient care^(19,20).

As for the consequences, terms such as “qualification of care”, “guarantee of safe practice” and “quality” emerged, indicating ways to ensure that professionals perform procedures safely. This finding is in line with studies^(19,20,22) showing that the adoption of protocols by health professionals supports the provision of precise and efficient care, through the fulfillment of managerial, educational, and communication functions.

Also, the health protocol influences professional practice, encouraging the frequent performance of preventive activities, improving team behavior when faced with problems, and, consequently, controlling risk factors related to care⁽²³⁾. As a positive consequence of the use of health protocols, improvements in therapeutic results and the quality of life of patients are observed, in addition to aiding professionals in decision-making. Studies^(1,22,24) highlight that protocols are instruments constructed by professionals based on scientific evidence, to promote quality care practice.

Regarding the attributes of the concept studied, we observed that the health protocol provides quality academic knowledge for patient care, guidance of routine practices and procedures, patient safety, and safety culture. These aspects are evidenced in studies^(8,20,22,25,26) that state that the implementation of updated protocols is necessary so that professionals can provide care with competence, quality, and safety in a standardized manner, supported by scientific evidence.

A study⁽²⁷⁾ indicates that the protocol standardizes the decision-making process, contributing to better care practices by professionals who use this technological tool, to effectively impact patient care. Regarding the analysis of the similarity between the terms that constitute the “health protocol”, relationships (represented by robust lines) are observed between the words “care”, “health”, “problem”, “assistance”, and “decisions”, indicating that the health protocol is directly related to these terms, with less robust connections that represent care practice. Studies^(27,28) reinforce the feasibility of providing quality care through adherence to protocols by health professionals. Therefore, the health protocol assists in solving problems and making decisions for systematized care, providing effective and quality care^(27,28).

CONCLUSION

Based on this conceptual analysis, the health protocol is described as a tool or instrument that supports health professionals in decision-making and in promoting adequate and quality care. The concept studied is broad, as it involves substitute terms and concepts related to the practice and quality of health care. Based on these elements, the definition of the concept of health protocol was developed. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to the elucidation of the concept evaluated, to establish an adequate concept, based on the scientific literature to favor its correct use. However, the study has limitations since it included only theses and dissertations for analysis and there is a small number of international publications in the final sample of the study.

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