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ORIGINAL

Community Nursing and Sexuality in Argentina

Enfermería Comunitaria y la Sexualidad en la Argentina

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The study addressed the role of community nursing in the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and adolescent pregnancy in the town of Granadero Baigorria, Santa Fe. These issues significantly affect the health and social opportunities of adolescents, especially in marginalized communities. The research highlighted the importance of primary health care to develop strategic actions for sexual health promotion and prevention.

Methods: A descriptive, cross-sectional, non-experimental, qualitative, descriptive study was conducted. Twelve community nurses from five local health centers participated. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and documents and records were analyzed. In addition, a literature review was conducted to contextualize the actions and limitations of the nursing staff. The data were organized in a systematization matrix and analyzed in categories related to the issues addressed.

Results: The study revealed an increase in consultations for STIs and adolescent pregnancies, although lack of records made precise quantification difficult. The nurses identified local risk factors and developed immediate promotion and prevention strategies, although they faced obstacles such as lack of time, high demand, lack of supplies, and organizational difficulties. Most participants did not conduct community education activities due to these limitations.

Conclusions: The research evidenced the relevance of the role of community nursing, although it identified restrictions that limit its strategic action. It was concluded that improving organization, available time and resources could strengthen preventive and educational interventions in sexual health, benefiting adolescents in Granadero Baigorria. These findings underscore the need for territorial health policies focused on these issues.

Keywords: Community nursing; Adolescent pregnancy; Sexually transmitted infections; Prevention; Primary care.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El estudio abordó el rol de la enfermería comunitaria en la prevención de infecciones de transmisión sexual (ITS) y embarazo adolescente en la localidad de Granadero Baigorria, Santa Fe. Estas problemáticas afectan de manera significativa la salud y las oportunidades sociales de los adolescentes, especialmente en comunidades marginadas. La investigación destacó la importancia de la atención primaria para desarrollar acciones estratégicas de promoción y prevención en salud sexual.

Métodos: Se llevó a cabo un estudio descriptivo transversal, no experimental, con enfoque cualitativo. Participaron 12 enfermeros comunitarios de cinco centros de salud de la localidad. Se aplicaron entrevistas semiestructuradas y se analizaron documentos y registros. Además, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica para contextualizar las acciones y limitaciones del personal de enfermería. Los datos se organizaron en una matriz de sistematización y se analizaron en categorías relacionadas con las problemáticas abordadas.

Resultados: El estudio reveló un aumento en las consultas por ITS y embarazos adolescentes, aunque la falta de registros dificultó la cuantificación precisa. Los enfermeros identificaron factores de riesgo locales y desarrollaron estrategias inmediatas de promoción y prevención, aunque enfrentaron obstáculos como falta de tiempo, alta demanda, carencia de insumos y dificultades organizativas. La mayoría de los participantes no realizaba actividades educativas comunitarias debido a estas limitaciones.

Conclusiones: La investigación evidenció la relevancia del rol de la enfermería comunitaria, aunque identificó restricciones que limitan su accionar estratégico. Se concluyó que mejorar la organización, el tiempo disponible y los recursos podría fortalecer las intervenciones preventivas y educativas en salud sexual, beneficiando a los adolescentes de Granadero Baigorria. Estos hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de políticas sanitarias territoriales enfocadas en estas problemáticas.

Palabras clave: Enfermería comunitaria; Embarazo adolescente; Infecciones de transmisión sexual; Prevención; Atención primaria.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, teenage pregnancy is still a social problem since although this fertility is unwanted mainly, it is relatively high (65 per thousand in 2013) compared to that of neighboring countries such as Uruguay, Chile, and Brazil and has increased by 14.6% between 2003 and 2013 (Gogna and Binstock, 2017).

The fact that adolescent pregnancy is a risk factor for premature birth, less than 37 weeks of gestation, as well as fetal growth restriction, the need for an episiotomy, cephalopelvic disproportion, postpartum hemorrhage, or maternal death. In addition, teenage pregnancy can also lead to problems at school, difficulty in entering the world of work, and significantly interferes with the possibility of earning sufficient income (Cabanillas de Ayague, 2018).

In addition to this, in marginalized neighborhoods, teenage pregnancy is more visible, given that women tend to start families at an earlier age in an attempt to improve the precarious conditions in which they live. However, due to various factors, many young women are abandoned by their initial partner and are forced to form another relationship that always leads to more children. As a result of this process, a 20-year-old woman can have four or more children and probably a more significant number of pregnancies that end in miscarriages or abortions (Cabanillas de Ayague, 2018).

The importance of this research lies in the fact that community nursing can be essential when it comes to intervening from their place in primary care with strategic actions through health promotion, disease prevention, timely detection and treatment of diseases, and coordination with the other

members of the team. Overall, this research aims to raise awareness about addressing these current issues.

What is the role of the community nurse in the town of Granada Baigorria (Santa Fe) in the prevention of teenage pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections, and what are the possible obstacles and/or limitations in care?

General objective

To understand the role of the community nurse in the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy and to identify possible professional obstacles in the care process.

METHODS

Design

The study was cross-sectional, descriptive, non-experimental, and qualitative.

Area of Study

It was carried out in the town of Baigorria, which has five health centers for the population, each strategically located in neighborhood areas that provide medical and nursing care. The population also has the care of the reference hospital of that locality, although primary health care (PHC) is centered in the peripheries, in neighborhoods. In some effectors, the nurse acts as a coordinator for the center and carries out particular nursing tasks.

Participants

The study involved professional and graduate nurses who worked in health centers in the town of Granada Baigorria.

Sample

The sample consisted of 12 community nurses, 4 of whom were graduates, and eight professional nurses (two of whom were studying for their degrees). In terms of length of service, the majority had been working in primary care for 6 years or more.

The type of sampling used is non-probabilistic; specifically, non-random sampling was used for convenience.

Techniques and instruments

The techniques implemented were semi-structured interviews and analysis of documents, records, materials, and artifacts.

To establish the role of community nursing (primary healthcare) in the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy, a bibliographic review was carried out of the material "Introduction to Community Nursing" by Jaquier et al. (2011). To capture the analysis of the literary material, definitions such as promotion and prevention, as well as actions, places, and recipients, were analyzed.

To determine the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy, data was obtained by manually quantifying the care provided daily by medical professionals.

Finally, to investigate the obstacles and/or limitations of nursing, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nursing professionals who provide care in the different health centers in the town of Granada Baigorria, alluding to the issues to be addressed and the problems and were scheduled to be carried out in an estimated time of 20 minutes during the working day. The interview format covered the following areas: local assessment of the population's need for nursing-related risk factors and the implementation of independent strategic actions, the increase in care about sexually transmitted infections and/or unplanned teenage pregnancy, nursing consultations on the use of contraceptive methods or the possibility of pregnancy, addressing these issues, individual and collective strategic actions they use, talks about sex education / contraceptive methods / sexually transmitted infections, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work, posters/brochures related to the issues, access to places

where adolescents gather to address these issues, obstacles to the development of the nursing role and limitations to the development of independent nursing strategies.

Pilot test

To validate the instrument (interview), given the difficulty that arose in understanding the questions asked in the first interview, the decision was made to modify several of the questions, as they turned out to be very broad, which caused the interviewee to turn his attention to topics that were not relevant to this research, leaving that first interview as a pilot test; although it is advisable for pilot tests that the sample size be 10% of the total population; a smaller sample can be helpful to eliminate unnecessary questions or adjust them. However, the instrument's validity was also validated through qualified voices, that is, expert validity.

Analysis strategies

An information systematization matrix was constructed to analyze the data collected in the interviews and the data that emerged from the bibliography *Introduction to Community Nursing*.

For constructing the matrix, segments of the text from the interviews were collected using the free flow modality, which implies that the units do not have an equivalent size. These segments were selected because they were considered meaningful by the problem statement and the objectives of this research. In addition, constructing matrices helps establish links between categories or themes or between both (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado, and Baptista, 2010).

To establish an order in the data analysis, each of the topics selected for the matrix will be analyzed globally using the information provided by the interviewees.

Ethical considerations

The research was based on the principles of ethics, and the subjects were people and professional nurses. Before conducting the interview, the provincial director of nursing in Santa Fe requested written authorization to carry out the study. The institution's managers and nurses were called together to explain the reasons for the interview format. The data collected was used solely for this study, and the participants, who were granted anonymity, signed an informed consent form.

RESULTS

The general objective of the present research was to determine the role of the community nurse in the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy and to detect possible professional obstacles in the care process.

Likewise, the specific objectives were to describe the role of community nursing in the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy, to identify obstacles and/or limitations in the fulfillment of the role of nursing in the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy in the town of Granada Baigorria and, finally, to ascertain the incidence of teenage pregnancy and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the primary care sector in Granadero Baigorria.

To gather this information, twelve interviews were conducted with primary health care nursing staff from Granada Baigorria, of whom 4 were graduates, and 8 were professional nurses (two were studying for their degree).

Regarding their length of service, the majority had been working in primary care for 6 years or more. The data collected in the interviews was grouped by category (see appendix B) to be analyzed together with the *Introduction to Community Nursing* literature by Jaquier et al. (2011), namely: incidence of STIs and teenage pregnancy, the role of nurses and obstacles to nursing practice (see appendix A).

Regarding incidence, a large proportion of those interviewed (10/12) responded that these problems had been increased. At the same time, the rest (2/12) indicated that although it is not a frequent problem due to the small area of coverage, situations for the treatment of STIs or teenage pregnancies do occasionally arise. Moreover, although there are no records of such consultations, as the register is

not up to date about data entry due to a lack of computer equipment or access to the internet, the interviewees were able to account for this problem.

About consultations with nurses about contraceptive methods and/or the possibility of unplanned pregnancy, all the interviewees said that these situations arise and, in order to deal with them, the nurse requests the attention of the doctor depending on the degree of urgency, either with a same-day appointment or with availability in the diary in situations that are not serious.

With regard to the role of the community nurse, the assessment of risk factors in the population and the strategic action to be taken in response to these problems were examined. In the interviews carried out, all the respondents agreed that they carry out a local assessment, identifying the factors that put people's health at risk, and generate care strategies at the moment of the consultation to favor the promotion and prevention of sexual health, only two of the interviewees mentioned giving sex education talks in the waiting room, with difficulty, due to lack of time because of the large number of daily consultations and due to disagreements in the organization of work.

There was also mention of talks on the promotion of sexual health and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, to which two of the interviewees said that they give talks at the local secondary school. One interviewee mentioned that he tried to give a talk in the waiting room of the health center, but due to limitations such as time, it was not as successful as he had hoped. The remaining interviewees (9) reported that they do not use this method of education due to a lack of time, a high demand for nursing, or a lack of organization within the team.

Suppose we consider the authors' contribution to the bibliography "Introduction to Community Nursing" (see Appendix A). In that case, we can infer that most participants cannot fulfill one of the abovementioned roles, which is to generate mechanisms for community participation through workshops, surveys, and talks.

Regarding multi- and interdisciplinary work to address these issues, all of them stated that the different professionals interact and cooperate. All of the interviewees said that they have material provided by the public health department (posters and brochures) and that these are available to the individual and/or community to provide sexual education tools and information on the prevention of STIs and pregnancy.

Jaquier et al. (2011) mention that community nursing is supported by the population's demographic and epidemiological transformations and socioeconomic and environmental changes. We can say that community nursing, in addition to being supported by healthcare reforms, scientific and technical advances, and the gradual increase in the number of socially excluded people, is reinforced by the needs of the population; that is to say, it requires a careful local assessment of the risk factors that endanger the individual, family and/or community from acquiring a disease, to be able to carry out strategic promotion and prevention actions focused on these risk factors.

Community nursing is closely related to the community, which maintains regular contact with citizens and groups where they live, work, or relate. The actual or potential health needs and risk factors that negatively affect the population are revealed to provide actions toward the recovery of health and/or maintenance (Jaquier et al., 2011).

The present bibliography indicates that the community nurse is the person who provides autonomous care, in collaboration with the doctor, to people of all ages, families, groups, and communities, whether they are healthy or sick, including actions to promote health, prevent disease, and care for those who are already ill, disabled or dying, concerning the implications of the actions, places, and recipients that involve the community nurse (Jaquier et al., 2011).

Community health nursing treats the subject of care in the global community, and its actions are aimed at the general population. In their daily practice, they integrate the concepts and methods of public health with those of nursing to carry out strategic care actions at different levels, mobilizing the individual and collective resources of the community to help it achieve better levels of health. Finally,

they determine the impact of their actions on the subject of care, evaluating their attention and care (Jaquier et al., 2011).

The obstacles and limitations presented as difficulties in nursing actions, referred to in the interviews, were the following: lack of time due to the high demand for nursing care due to the increase in the number of daily attendances, lack of supplies, to a lesser extent, and lack of organization with the team. On the other hand, several interviewees replied that they do not present obstacles and limitations for fulfilling the nursing role.

When analyzing these axes, it is reflected that the obstacles that prevent the fulfillment of the nursing role towards the promotion of safe sexuality and prevention of STIs and/or pregnancies in this town of Granadero Baigorria are the lack of time, the high demand, and the lack of supplies. On the other hand, when analyzing the limitations of independent nursing actions, we observe that the lack of time was also mentioned. The lack of time due to high demand, lack of organization with the team, lack of supplies, or simply the failure to develop independent nursing actions interferes with strategic actions to resolve these community problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account that the question that arose at the beginning of this investigation was regarding the role of community nursing in the town of Granada Baigorria, Santa Fe, in the prevention of teenage pregnancy and/or STIs and what the possible obstacles to care are. We can conclude that the role of community nurses in the prevention of teenage pregnancy and STIs in the health centers in the town of Granada Baigorria, Santa Fe province, is to carry out a local assessment, identifying the factors that put people's health at risk, and to generate care strategies at the time of the consultation to promote sexual health promotion and prevention. It was also found that community nurses should have closer relationships with the community and provide autonomous care in collaboration with doctors.

Regarding the detection of possible obstacles for professionals in the care process, factors such as lack of time, difficulties in organizing and coordinating teamwork, and, to a lesser extent, lack of supplies prevent the development of independent actions by community nurses.

About the specific objective of determining the incidence of teenage pregnancy and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections at the primary care level, we can conclude that an increase in consultations on these issues was detected in the care centers in the town of Granada Baigorria.

This study revealed limitations during its development, including the quantification of the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and/or pregnancy in adolescents due to the poor computerized accounting of medical care in the Information Program System of the Province of Santa Fe (SICAP). However, the incidence of these problems could be evidenced through the interviewees.

Another restriction arose with one of the instruments used in the data collection, the interview, as there was confusion about the questions at the time of the interview. The difficulty arose when identifying the factors that put people's health at risk in order to generate strategic actions and thus promote health or prevent disease, giving rise to a broad assessment of the needs of the population, which was solved by modifying that axis with a focus on sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy. As mentioned above, the first interview remained a pilot test, after which reliable answers could be obtained on these topics of interest for this research.

The present research demonstrated the strength of evidencing the current role of community nursing. The bibliography addressed evidence regarding the role of nursing, which showed a decrease in independent strategic promotion and prevention actions for specific sex education for adolescents in the locality of Granadero Baigorria.

The current obstacles to nursing staff's development of strategies were also evident, including time, supplies, and a lack of team organization.

These findings may be important in promoting the development of care strategies in the different primary care teams and addressing the current problems of adolescents.

The importance of both the promotion of safe sex and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and/or unplanned teenage pregnancies is highlighted for two reasons: first, because promoting sexual health at this stage of impulsiveness, sexual development, and maturation, when the individual is immersed in physical, cognitive and psychological changes, of finding their identity, and where the advantage of actively searching for and listening to answers is possible. Secondly, the fact of making them aware of the factors that put their health at risk through specific education generates factors that protect their health, favoring knowledge for decision-making in their sexual life.

It would be of great value to develop strategic actions in community nursing aimed at improving the sexual health of young people in the town of Granada Baigorria. This would generate the tools to make the best decisions about their sexual lives, with the advantage of having the guidelines of provincial/national programs and working together with community nurses.

In short, health promotion and disease prevention should aim to educate individuals, families, and communities about the perception of specific risks to achieve their commitment and participation in modifying them. Identifying these risk factors in individuals, families, and communities allows for the design of strategies to prevent disease, reduce risks, and detect future dangers in individuals and communities (Jaquier et al., 2011).

Finally, the results of this research could be considered for reassessing community nursing actions and could also help design territorial health policies.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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