

IV Women Present: accessibility, inclusion, and nursing care for women who use wheelchairs

IV Mujeres Presentes: accesibilidad, inclusión y atención de enfermería para mujeres que usan sillas de ruedas

IV Mulheres Presentes: acessibilidade, inclusão e cuidado de enfermagem às mulheres que usam cadeira de rodas

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Abstract

This experience report describes and analyzes the event “IV Women Present: Women Who Use Wheelchairs in Focus,” held within the scope of the Nursing in Basic Women’s Health Care course at a federal public higher education institution. The activity aimed to promote reflection on accessibility, inclusion, and nursing care for women with disabilities. The event involved faculty, students, and health professionals, as well as the participation of women wheelchair users, who shared their experiences and challenges in accessing health services. The experience contributed to the development of critical, ethical, and humanizing competencies, reinforcing the importance of training nurses committed to inclusive and equitable care, in accordance with the principles of the Unified Health System (SUS) and the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities.

Descriptors: Nursing; Accessibility; Social Inclusion; Women’s Health; Disabled Persons.

Resumén

Este informe de experiencia describe y analiza el evento “IV Mujeres Presentes: Mujeres en Silla de Ruedas en Primer Plano”, realizado en el marco del curso de Enfermería en Atención Básica a la Salud de la Mujer en una institución pública federal de educación superior. La actividad tuvo como objetivo promover la reflexión sobre la accesibilidad, la inclusión y la atención de enfermería para mujeres con discapacidad. En el evento participaron docentes, estudiantes y profesionales de la salud, así como mujeres usuarias de silla de ruedas, quienes compartieron sus experiencias y desafíos en el acceso a los servicios de salud. La experiencia contribuyó al desarrollo de competencias críticas, éticas y humanizadoras, reforzando la importancia de formar enfermeras comprometidas con una atención inclusiva y equitativa, de acuerdo con los principios del Sistema Único de Salud (SUS) y la Ley Brasileña de Inclusión de las Personas con Discapacidad.

Descriptorios: Enfermería; Accesibilidad; Inclusión Social; Salud de la Mujer; Personas con Discapacidad.

Resumo

O presente relato de experiência descreve e analisa o evento “IV Mulheres Presentes: Mulheres que usam cadeira de rodas em foco”, realizado no âmbito da disciplina Enfermagem nos Cuidados Básicos à Saúde da Mulher, de uma instituição pública federal de ensino superior. A atividade teve como objetivo promover reflexões sobre acessibilidade, inclusão e cuidado de enfermagem às mulheres com deficiência. O evento envolveu docentes, discentes e profissionais de saúde, além da participação de mulheres cadeirantes, que compartilharam suas experiências e desafios no acesso aos serviços de saúde. A vivência contribuiu para o desenvolvimento de competências críticas, éticas e humanizadoras, reforçando a importância da formação de enfermeiros comprometidos com o cuidado inclusivo e equitativo, conforme os princípios do Sistema Único de Saúde e da Lei Brasileira de Inclusão da Pessoa com Deficiência.

Descritores: Enfermagem; Acessibilidade; Inclusão Social; Saúde da Mulher; Pessoas com Deficiência.



Introduction

Comprehensive women's health care is one of the structuring pillars of public health policies in Brazil, consolidated by the National Policy for Comprehensive Women's Health Care (PNAISM), which guides actions aimed at promoting, preventing, and restoring health based on equity, comprehensiveness, and respect for diversity¹. This policy reaffirms the Brazilian State's commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, to reducing gender inequalities, and to expanding women's access to dignified and humane care.

However, the implementation of these principles still faces challenges when it comes to women with disabilities, whose gender experience is marked by physical, communicational, attitudinal, and institutional barriers. According to 2023 data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Continuous PNAD) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), approximately 18.6 million people with disabilities live in Brazil, representing 8.9% of the population, with the majority being women (58.2%)². These data highlight the need for more inclusive public policies and care practices that consider the specificities of gender and disability in the context of healthcare.

The Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 13.146/2015), also known as the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, establishes guidelines to ensure and promote, under conditions of equality, the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities, aiming at their social inclusion and full citizenship³. In the field of health, the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities (LBI) reinforces the duty of services to guarantee accessible, humane, and discrimination-free care, in addition to providing for the ongoing training of health professionals to deal with the specific needs of this population.

In this context, nursing education plays a central role in promoting care that recognizes and values human diversity. The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for the Undergraduate Nursing Course, established by Resolution CNE/CES No. 3/2001, state that nurses should be trained as generalist, humanist, critical, and reflective professionals, capable of acting based on ethical principles and a social commitment to the integral health of the human being⁴. This training aims to prepare future nurses to understand the multiple dimensions of care, working to promote equity and address health inequalities.

The presence of women who use wheelchairs in healthcare services raises reflections on ableism and the need to rethink the care environment and professional practice. Many of these women report difficulties in accessing gynecological consultations, participating in cancer screening programs, or simply accessing health units due to a lack of adequate infrastructure. Such barriers violate the principle of equity in health and highlight the urgency of incorporating the perspective of accessibility and human rights into training processes and care practices⁵.

University, as a space for knowledge production and social transformation, plays a strategic role in promoting debates that bring students closer to the real demands of the

population. Thus, the event "IV Women Present: Women Who Use Wheelchairs in Focus," developed within the scope of the Nursing in Basic Women's Health Care course at the Nursing Institute of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, emerges as a teaching and awareness-raising strategy. The initiative fostered the integration of technical and human knowledge, strengthening the critical and ethical training of future nurses, and promoted discussions on inclusion, accessibility, and comprehensive health care for women with disabilities.

The objective was to report and analyze the experience of organizing and participating in the "IV Women Present" event, highlighting reflections on accessibility, inclusion, and nursing care for women with disabilities.

Methodology

This is an experience report, using a qualitative and descriptive approach, developed from experiences within the context of the Nursing in Primary Health Care for Women course, offered by a federal public higher education institution. The study was conducted during the second semester of 2025 and involved faculty, students, and invited professionals, including women who use wheelchairs, creating a space for dialogue and exchange of knowledge.

The qualitative methodology was chosen because it allows for a subjective and interpretive understanding of reality, valuing lived experiences and the meanings attributed by the participants¹. This approach allows us to understand the human, social, and symbolic dimensions that permeate the educational process and nursing care, especially when dealing with topics such as disability, gender, and inclusion.

The event was structured in accordance with the principles of the National Policy for Comprehensive Women's Health Care (PNAISM), which guides care actions based on equity, comprehensiveness, and respect for diversity, and also with the guidelines of the Unified Health System (SUS), particularly the principle of equity, which ensures everyone's right to health considering their specificities and vulnerabilities¹.

As a theoretical framework, we adopted Paulo Freire's Liberating Education, which proposes a teaching-learning process based on dialogue, active listening, and valuing the experiences of the subjects⁶. This perspective seeks to break with the banking model of education and promote critical, reflective, and emancipatory learning, encouraging student leadership and the collective construction of knowledge. This perspective breaks with the banking model of education and promotes critical and emancipatory learning, encouraging student leadership and the collective construction of knowledge.

Furthermore, the pedagogical proposal aligned with the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for the Undergraduate Nursing Course (CNE/CES Resolution No. 3/2001), which establish that nurses should be trained as generalist, humanist, critical and reflective professionals, capable of acting ethically and in a socially responsible manner⁵. Thus, the event fostered the development of



ethical, technical, critical, and humanizing skills focused on nursing care for women with disabilities.

The methodological process involved joint planning between teachers and students, the participatory definition of themes and guests, and the organization of an interdisciplinary space for reflection, where personal and professional experiences could be shared. Participant observation and reflective records produced during the activity served as the basis for systematizing this experience.

In this way, the account reflects the experience of a formative process that goes beyond traditional teaching, bringing students closer to the real demands of society and inclusive practices in health, strengthening nursing's commitment to human rights and gender and disability equity.

Experience Report

The event "IV Women Present" was conceived as a pedagogical action integrated into the training process of the Nursing in Basic Women's Health Care discipline, to promote critical reflections on the multiple dimensions that permeate women's health in the contemporary context. The initiative reinforces the principles that guide the public university and contributes to the training of nurses committed to social transformation and equity in health⁴.

The choice of the theme "Women who use wheelchairs in focus" emerged from classroom discussions about the invisibility of people with disabilities in health services and the need to address accessibility as a human right and an ethical dimension of care. This decision reflects the commitment of nursing education to the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs), which advocate for the training of a critical, reflective professional capable of acting with social responsibility⁴.

The event planning was developed collaboratively, involving faculty and students. The initial stages included meetings to define objectives, schedule, guests, and methodological strategies, prioritizing active listening and horizontal dialogue among all those involved. Final-year undergraduate nursing students participated in the logistical and pedagogical organization, developing guiding questions, handling publicity, and welcoming participants on the day of the activity, which fostered student leadership and the exercise of autonomy.

The event was attended by healthcare professionals, teachers, and women in wheelchairs, who shared their experiences regarding access to services, the challenges posed by architectural, communicational, and attitudinal barriers, and the impact of ableism on daily care. The talks revealed concrete situations of exclusion and neglect, but also inspiring practices of overcoming and resistance, highlighting the role of nursing as an agent of social transformation in defending accessibility and the reproductive and sexual rights of women with disabilities⁷.

Assistive technologies applicable to nursing practice were presented, such as adaptations for gynecological examinations, mobility devices, adapted chairs, and alternative and augmentative communication resources, which can facilitate the therapeutic bond and the autonomy

of users. These discussions encouraged students to recognize the importance of technological innovation combined with empathy and active listening, pillars of inclusive and humanized care.

Throughout the activity, the active involvement of the student body was observed, who expressed concerns about gaps in professional training and in the preparedness of healthcare teams to meet the needs of women with disabilities. The event culminated in a collective debate, in which participants expressed their commitment to defending the right to health without barriers, reaffirming that inclusion must be understood as an ethical and political principle of nursing care.

This experience demonstrated that professional training is strengthened when it connects to social realities and promotes dialogue between different areas of knowledge. The "IV Women Present" event thus became a formative space for awareness-raising, listening, and collective construction, contributing to the development of critical, reflective, and humanizing competencies in the field of women's health.

Discussion

The reported experience reaffirms the relevance of educational spaces that stimulate critical reflection on inclusion, accessibility, and gender equity in nursing care. The inclusion of pedagogical experiences that address disability as part of human diversity contributes to deconstructing stereotypes and promoting a professional practice more sensitive to differences. Nursing education must encompass diversity and prepare professionals capable of recognizing, problematizing, and intervening in inequalities that compromise access to and quality of healthcare⁴.

Women with disabilities face complex obstacles that extend beyond physical barriers, including ableism, institutional invisibility, and discriminatory attitudes within healthcare settings. These barriers compromise the exercise of the right to comprehensive health and reinforce the urgency of inclusive policies and practices⁷. The Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 13.146/2015) establishes that access to healthcare must occur under equal conditions, ensuring respect for the dignity and autonomy of persons with disabilities³. In this context, the training of healthcare professionals, especially nurses, is essential to ensure humane, ethical, and unbiased care in accordance with the principles of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS).

The event "IV Women Present" puts into practice the principles of the National Policy for Comprehensive Women's Health Care (PNAISM), which recognizes women in their entirety and diversity¹. Furthermore, it aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 5 (gender equality), reinforcing the university's commitment to promoting equity and human rights⁸.

From a pedagogical point of view, the experience is also based on Paulo Freire's Liberating Education, which proposes dialogue, listening, and critical reflection as means



of transforming reality⁶. Creating participatory and dialogical spaces between students, teachers, and women with disabilities strengthens the autonomy of individuals and promotes awareness of the social role of nursing in advocating for barrier-free healthcare.

Recent studies indicate that including topics on disability and accessibility in nursing curricula contributes to increasing the empathy, ethical commitment, and cultural competence of future professionals^{9,10}. In this way, initiatives such as the "IV Women Present" event are powerful strategies for teaching and transforming care practices by enabling the encounter between technical knowledge and life experiences.

Thus, the experience reaffirms the role of the university as a space of resistance and knowledge production committed to social justice, capable of training critical, reflective nurses engaged in defending the rights of women with disabilities.

Conclusion

The "IV Women Present" event proved to be a highly relevant formative experience for the nursing

teaching-learning process, enabling meaningful learning about accessibility, inclusion, and care for women with disabilities. The dialogue between students, healthcare professionals, and women in wheelchairs fostered the collective construction of knowledge and reinforced the inseparable link between education and current health needs. The experience allowed for reflection on the ethical, political, and social responsibility of nurses in promoting equitable, humanized, and prejudice-free care. By bringing future professionals closer to the realities experienced by women with disabilities, the event contributed to the development of critical and humanizing competencies, in line with the principles of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) and the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities.

Finally, this activity reaffirms the importance of cross-cutting the themes of disability, human rights, and gender equality into nursing education. The consolidation of truly accessible and barrier-free healthcare depends on the commitment of training institutions to prepare professionals capable of transforming realities, acting as agents of social change and advocates for inclusion and social justice.

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