

Between touches, senses, and affections: pathways of desire and care for elderly women in primary care

Entre toques, sentidos y afectos: caminos del deseo y del cuidado en la mujer mayor en la atención primaria

Entre toques, sentidos e afetos: caminhos do desejo e do cuidado na mulher idosa na atenção primária

Mariana Rodrigues de Carvalho¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-5389-6416

Helaine Maria da Silva Oliveira¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-9430-5782

Isabela Vitória da Silva Figueira²

ORCID: 0009-0003-6049-9800

Glycia de Almeida Nogueira¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-2986-2427

Bianca Campos Oliveira¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-6348-3287

Julia Tavares Ferreira Barros¹

ORCID: 0009-0005-8974-1407

Ana Paula Fontes Iglesias¹

ORCID: 0000-0003-3885-3810

Fernanda Marques dos Santos de Carvalho¹

ORCID: 0009-0002-2098-6500

Rosane Brinques Lourenci³

ORCID: 0009-0004-4600-5664

Patricia Soares Augusto¹

ORCID: 0000-0003-4046-6035

Carine Silvestrini Sena Lima da Silva^{1*}

ORCID: 0000-0002-4631-000X

¹Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

²Secretaria Municipal de Saúde do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

³Universidade Estácio de Sá. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

How to cite this article:

Carvalho MR, Oliveira HMS, Figueira IVS, Nogueira GA, Oliveira BC, Barros JTF, Iglesias APF, Carvalho FMS, Lourenci RB, Augusto OS, Silva CSSL. Between touches, senses, and affections: pathways of desire and care for elderly women in primary care. Glob Acad Nurs. 2025;6(Sup.3):e524. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5935/2675-5602.20200524>

*Corresponding author:

carine.nsilvestrini@gmail.com

Submission: 05-02-2025

Approval: 08-14-2025

Abstract

This study aimed to report the experience of implementing systematized nursing consultations for elderly people in primary care, focusing on the approach to sexuality. It is a descriptive study, of the experience report type, developed in a Basic Health Unit throughout 2024. The actions were conducted by nursing students and professors and involved participatory planning, individual nursing consultations, and the holding of discussion groups on sexuality in old age, segregated by sex, based on Freirean methodology. The experience demonstrated the effectiveness of nursing consultations in identifying vulnerabilities, strengthening the therapeutic bond, and promoting autonomy. The activities revealed a significant lack of knowledge among the elderly about aspects of sexual health, such as the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and the presence of taboos that limit dialogue on the subject. The educational approach, centered on dialogue and problematization, allowed for the shared construction of knowledge, clarification of doubts, and reduction of insecurities. Nursing consultations have proven to be an essential tool for the comprehensive care of older adults, positioning the nurse as a key player in promoting active, safe, and prejudice-free sexual health.

Descriptors: Aged Health; Sexuality; Primary Health Care; Nursing Consultation; Health Education.

Resumén

El objetivo era informar la experiencia de implementar consultas de enfermería sistematizadas para personas mayores en atención primaria, con énfasis en el abordaje de la sexualidad. Se trata de un estudio descriptivo, de tipo informe de experiencia, desarrollado en una Unidad Básica de Salud durante el año 2024. Las acciones fueron llevadas a cabo por estudiantes y profesores de enfermería e incluyeron planificación participativa, consultas individuales de enfermería y la realización de grupos de discusión sobre sexualidad en la vejez, segregados por sexo, con base en la metodología freireana. La experiencia demostró la eficacia de las consultas de enfermería para identificar vulnerabilidades, fortalecer el vínculo terapéutico y promover la autonomía. Las actividades revelaron un importante desconocimiento entre las personas mayores sobre aspectos de la salud sexual, como la prevención de infecciones de transmisión sexual, y la presencia de tabúes que limitan el diálogo sobre el tema. El enfoque educativo, centrado en el diálogo y la problematización, permitió la construcción compartida de conocimientos, la aclaración de dudas y la reducción de inseguridades. Las consultas de enfermería han demostrado ser una herramienta esencial para la atención integral de las personas mayores, posicionando a la enfermera como un actor clave en la promoción de una salud sexual activa, segura y libre de prejuicios.

Descriptorios: Salud del Anciano; Sexualidad; Atención Primaria de Salud; Consulta de Enfermería; Educación en Salud.

Resumo

Objetivou-se relatar a experiência da implementação de consultas de enfermagem sistematizadas para pessoas idosas na atenção primária, com foco na abordagem da sexualidade. Trata-se de um estudo descritivo, do tipo relato de experiência, desenvolvido em uma Unidade Básica de Saúde ao longo de 2024. As ações foram conduzidas por discentes e docentes de enfermagem e envolveram o planejamento participativo, consultas de enfermagem individuais e a realização de rodas de conversa sobre sexualidade na terceira idade, segregadas por sexo, fundamentadas na metodologia freireana. A experiência demonstrou a efetividade da consulta de enfermagem na identificação de vulnerabilidades, fortalecimento do vínculo terapêutico e promoção da autonomia. As atividades evidenciaram um significativo desconhecimento entre os idosos sobre aspectos da saúde sexual, como a prevenção de infecções sexualmente transmissíveis, e a presença de tabus que limitam o diálogo sobre o tema. A abordagem educativa, centrada no diálogo e na problematização, permitiu a construção compartilhada de conhecimento, o esclarecimento de dúvidas e a redução de inseguranças. A consulta de enfermagem mostrou-se um dispositivo essencial para o cuidado integral da pessoa idosa, posicionando o enfermeiro como protagonista na promoção de uma saúde sexual ativa, segura e livre de preconceitos.

Descriptorios: Saúde do Idoso; Sexualidade; Atenção Primária à Saúde; Consulta de Enfermagem; Educação em Saúde.



Introduction

Primary Health Care (PHC) is the preferred entry point to the Unified Health System (SUS), responsible for coordinating care, organizing health care networks, and ensuring comprehensive and equitable access to services¹. In this context, nursing consultation emerges as an essential care technology, capable of promoting comprehensive care and strengthening the bond between health professionals and users.

This is an activity exclusive to nurses, regulated by Law No. 7,498/1986 and COFEN Resolution No. 358/2009, which establishes the Nursing Care Systematization (SAE) as the organizing methodology for care^{2,3}. Through nursing consultations, professionals conduct a comprehensive assessment of the individual, family, and community, identify health needs, and implement appropriate interventions, ensuring continuous and personalized follow-up.

In primary health care (PHC), this practice takes on specific characteristics, focused on health promotion, disease prevention, monitoring of chronic conditions, and health education. Unlike the traditional biomedical model, which prioritizes the treatment of diseases, the PHC approach values active listening, humanized care, and the collaborative development of care plans, strengthening person-centered care⁵.

The motivation for this experience report stems from the need to systematize and share experiences in implementing structured nursing consultations in a Primary Health Care Unit (PHCU). The aim is to highlight the challenges faced, the strategies adopted, and the results achieved, contributing to the improvement of nursing practices in PHC and inspiring other professionals to develop more effective and qualified care. In this way, the nurse in PHC plays a strategic role in coordinating care, acting as a link between different levels of care and promoting continuity of assistance. Nursing consultation represents a privileged moment for establishing therapeutic bonds, identifying vulnerabilities, and constructing unique therapeutic projects aligned with the needs and particularities of the individuals and communities served⁶.

Methodology

This is a descriptive study, presented as an experience report, developed in a Basic Health Unit (UBS) throughout 2024, in the context of implementing nursing consultations aimed at different groups within Primary Health Care (PHC). The experience was conducted by students and professors from the Internship program, who continuously monitored the unit's actions, experiencing the challenges and potential of health care, and developing a critical and articulate perspective on the needs of the territory.

The activities were guided by a critical-reflective perspective inspired by Paulo Freire's methodology, which values problematizing reality, dialogue, and the collective construction of knowledge. This approach allowed educators and students to share knowledge, identify local needs, and develop educational strategies aligned with the population's

requirements. The planning involved meetings between the primary health care unit team, faculty, and students, with analysis of secondary data to characterize the profile of the assigned population and define priorities. Based on this diagnosis, nursing actions were structured to care for the elderly, adults with chronic conditions, and other primary health care groups. This report highlights the experience with educational activities on sexuality in old age. Based on the needs identified in the territory and the Freirean proposal of emancipatory education, individual consultations and discussion groups were organized. The Family Health Strategy supported the entire process, contributing to the mobilization of users.

The activities took place at the primary health care unit (UBS) and included initial reception, blood pressure measurement, review of the Elderly Person's Health Record, and guidance on medication, vaccination, and lifestyle habits. Following this, the elderly were directed to discussion groups organized in small groups, separated by gender, to encourage participation. The meetings addressed topics such as sexuality in old age, changes associated with aging, taboos and prejudices, prevention of STIs, and strategies for maintaining an active and safe sex life. A banner with guiding questions aided the discussions, which were built upon the participants' own experiences. Finally, guidance was reinforced, and condoms and lubricants provided by the UBS were distributed, encouraging comprehensive care and preventive practices.

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, under opinion number 7.182.463.

Results and Discussion

At the end of the activities developed during the internship in Primary Health Care (PHC), it was observed, based on the reports of the elderly users themselves, that the nursing consultations provided new and relevant information about sexuality in old age. Studies indicate that a large proportion of the elderly are unaware of the importance of using condoms at this stage of life, as well as the increased prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) among older people, such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV⁷. Active listening also revealed that many expressed fears and insecurities about resuming their sex lives, motivated by social stigmas, family judgments, and misconceptions about aging and sexual capacity⁸.

With increased longevity and improved quality of life resulting from advances in healthcare, it becomes necessary to strengthen the role of Primary Health Care (PHC) to meet the specific needs of older adults. According to the Ministry of Health¹, Nursing consultation, as a systematized practice focused on comprehensive care, is essential for providing guidance on the physiological changes of aging and supporting the elderly in maintaining their affective and sexual lives safely and healthily. This comprehensive approach is in line with the guidelines of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) and the National Health Policy for the Elderly.



The lack of knowledge among the elderly regarding the incidence of STIs is a significant challenge identified during the internship. For many, the absence of condom use is motivated by the false perception of not belonging to the "risk group," a reality already described in the literature⁹. In this context, nursing consultations play a crucial educational role, offering individualized guidance, support, and clarification of doubts, reducing insecurities and promoting autonomy⁶.

Health education, integrated into consultations and group activities carried out by interns, proved to be an effective pedagogical tool. Through dialogue, active participation, and the shared construction of knowledge, with principles aligned with those advocated by the National Curriculum Guidelines, it was possible to stimulate critical reflection, strengthen self-care, and promote behavioral changes. Among the elderly, such processes contribute significantly to improving quality of life and preventing avoidable health problems⁴.

In the long term, systematic educational actions in primary health care can reduce costs associated with hospitalizations, medication use, and specialized treatments, as advocated by public policies such as the National Primary Care Policy and the National Health Policy for the Elderly¹. The Statute of the Elderly further reinforces the commitment of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) to guarantee comprehensive care and social rights, guiding practices that value the dignity, autonomy, and protection of this population group. In this context, nursing consultations, integrated into the work of the Family Health Strategy, become a central space for identifying vulnerabilities, preventing violence, and strengthening family bonds¹⁰.

From an educational standpoint, internship experience allows students to develop a broader view of sexuality in old age and understand its relevance to physical, emotional, and social well-being. The experiences within the community help interns deconstruct stereotypes and

recognize prejudices that can interfere with the quality of care, challenges also highlighted by studies on health education¹¹. Thus, the participation of interns in nursing consultations fostered the development of clinical, communication, and educational skills, essential for a critical, humanized practice aligned with the principles of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS).

Conclusion

Nursing consultations in Primary Health Care have proven to be an essential tool for the comprehensive care of the elderly, highlighting the nurse as a key player in promoting community health and building therapeutic bonds. During the internship, this practice allowed for the understanding that addressing sexuality in old age should be part of the routine in health services, since it is still a frequently neglected topic due to the lack of preparedness and apprehension of many professionals. Recognizing that aging is a natural process and that the experience of sexuality accompanies the life cycle contributes to a more welcoming and non-judgmental approach, strengthening the elderly person's confidence and encouraging them to maintain a healthy and safe sex life. During the activities, the students sought to raise questions, promote reflection, and spark interest in the topic, allowing the elderly to feel encouraged to seek clarification and assistance when necessary.

This experience made it possible to articulate the theory of humanized care, advocated by the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), with the practice of nursing consultations in Primary Health Care (APS), through a broad and holistic view of care. Thus, it is reaffirmed that the promotion of knowledge is a valuable instrument for the empowerment of the elderly population, strengthening their autonomy and contributing to a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.

References

1. Brasil. Ministério da Saúde. Política Nacional de Atenção Básica. Brasília: Ministério da Saúde; 2017.
2. Brasil. Lei nº 7.498, de 25 de junho de 1986. Dispõe sobre a regulamentação do exercício da enfermagem. Diário Oficial da União, Brasília, DF; 1986.
3. Conselho Federal de Enfermagem (COFEN). Resolução COFEN nº 358/2009. Dispõe sobre a Sistematização da Assistência de Enfermagem e a implementação da documentação. Brasília: COFEN; 2009.
4. Almeida LC, Carvalho AS. Sistematização da Assistência de Enfermagem na Atenção Primária: desafios e perspectivas. Rev Bras Enferm. 2018;71(5):2345-52. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167-2017-0405>
5. Pires M, et al. Atenção centrada na pessoa na Atenção Primária: uma revisão integrativa. Rev Gaúcha Enferm. 2020;41:e20190365. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1983-1447.2020.20190365>
6. Ferreira MR, Lopes TS. Consulta de enfermagem na Atenção Primária: fortalecendo vínculos e promovendo saúde. Enferm Foco. 2019;10(1):45-51.
7. Pereira LS, Santos AL. A sexualidade na terceira idade: desafios e perspectivas para o cuidado de enfermagem. Rev Bras Geriatr Gerontol. 2019;22(4):547-55. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1981-22562019022.180169>
8. Gonçalves LC, Souza SP. A abordagem da sexualidade na velhice: uma revisão de literatura. Rev Bras Ter Integr. 2020;6(2):80-5.
9. Machado CAS, Silva MC. Promoção da saúde e o cuidado com a sexualidade na terceira idade: desafios na Atenção Primária. Rev Saúde Pública. 2020;54(3):225-32. <https://doi.org/10.11606/s1518-8787.2020054002004>
10. Lima TR, et al. A prática do enfermeiro na Atenção Primária à Saúde: um estudo integrativo. Rev Enferm Cent Oeste Mineiro. 2020;10:e3546. <https://doi.org/10.19175/recom.v10i0.3546>



11. Santos MG, et al. A importância da educação em saúde na promoção da saúde sexual de idosos: contribuições para a enfermagem. Rev Enferm Saúde. 2018;9(2):98-105.

