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*HUMANE CARE IN THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SETTING: NURSES' PERSPECTIVE*

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In 2003, the Brazilian Ministry of Health created a public policy focused on humane care, the National Humanization Policy (NHP). This policy should be implemented in all actions of health promotion, thus changing the traditional model of health management and care. The NHP should also strengthen shared management practices in the health work process and eventually meet the needs of health professionals and users of public health care in Brazil<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, the NHP advocates humane care, focusing on the appreciation of the individuals involved in the process, both users and professionals, supporting mutual autonomy and responsibility in health promotion<sup>1</sup>.

In the last few years, the humanization of the work relations and health care has encouraged important discussions within the Ministry of Health and in different health forums in the hospital context. Such discussions highlight the importance of this topic and show the need of taking action and putting care and human living into context<sup>2</sup>.

Then, humane care practices performed by health professionals and nurses come into play. These professionals are responsible for providing patients with the support they need to ensure their well-being. Health professionals play a very important role in the patients' battle against a disease, giving them, their families, and the health care team the necessary support<sup>3-5</sup>.

Therefore, the objective of the present study was to identify the nurses' perception of humane nursing care in a public hospital. To this end, a qualitative and descriptive research was carried out based on structured interviews with 10 nurses from a public hospital. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa (PR), Brazil.

Data were collected and organized according to content analysis (CA), which consists of a research technique dealing with words, allowing, in a practical and objective manner, to infer meanings based on the content of communication<sup>6</sup>. According to Bardin<sup>7</sup>, after data classification and organization, this technique enables the perception of the participants' knowledge about the topic of the research.

Based on data analysis, we identified six categories:

1) Understanding humane nursing care in public hospitals. Nurses showed they were familiar with the concept of humane care, although none of them accurately mentioned the concept.

2) Importance of humane nursing care in public health care. All respondents agreed on the importance of humane care, but there was no further discussion on the topic.

3) Reasons for discussing humane care. According to the nurses, some aspects should be highlighted, such as their clear concern about what is being said in the media and patients' knowledge about the care they receive.

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4) Humane care as a key aspect for good patient care in the hospital setting. There is a certain misunderstanding regarding the concepts of humane care. The answers were consistent; however, they did not really focus on the objectives of the NHP.

5) Knowledge about the National Humanization Policy. Most respondents showed they acknowledged the importance of the NHP. In addition, nurses had become familiar with the NHP in college, but they did not know the subject in depth.

6) Factors that make nursing care less humane in public health care facilities. Nurses are aware of important measures taken by them that can impair humane care on a daily basis.

Furthermore, we found that nurses acknowledge the importance of providing patients with humane care. However, human care is not an institutionalized process, which causes misunderstandings about its concepts. The nurses who participated in our study mentioned some aspects that prevent them from delivering humane care. Some of these aspects are shortage of employees, long working hours, mechanization, and lack of recognition and motivation. Therefore, it is important to consider the implementation of the National Humanization Policy, which may improve the care provided to patients and their families, as well as the quality of life and work conditions of health care professionals.

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