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## RESEARCH

## POPULAR KNOWLEDGE IN CARE OF THE NEWBORN WITH FOCUS ON HEALTH PROMOTION

SABERES POPULARES NO CUIDADO AO RECÉM-NASCIDO COM ENFOQUE NA PROMOÇÃO DA SAÚDE

CONOCIMIENTO POPULAR EN EL CUIDADO AL RECIÉN NACIDO CON ENFOQUE EN LA PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD

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## ABSTRACT

**Object:** verifying the influence of popular knowledge in the care of newborn, focusing on the promotion of child health. **Methods:** study with a qualitative approach, and was carried in public maternity hospital from Imperatriz-Maranhão, with 15 mothers of newborns. A questionnaire and semi-structured interview using thematic content analysis were used to collect data. **Results:** Three categories emerged: Knowledge used in the cleaning of the umbilical stump; Knowledge used to feed the newborn; Knowledge of practices used in daily care of the newborn; Knowledge used on diseases of the newborn. The reported knowledge and their influence on newborn care were prayers and blessings, herbal teas varied beliefs related to the care of umbilical stump, hiccups and sleep disorders. **Conclusion:** mothers do not rely heavily on the use of popular knowledge based practices, giving for credit to the guidelines given by the health professionals. **Descriptors:** Child care, Traditional medicine, Health promotion, Nursing.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** verificar a influência dos saberes populares no cuidado ao recém-nascido, com enfoque na promoção da saúde da criança. **Método:** Estudo qualitativo, realizado em maternidade pública, de Imperatriz-Maranhão, com 15 mães de recém-nascidos. Para a coleta de dados utilizaram-se formulário e entrevista semi-estruturada com análise temática de conteúdo. **Resultados:** categorias Saberes utilizados na higienização do coto umbilical; Saberes utilizados na alimentação do recém-nascido; Saberes utilizados nas práticas de cuidado cotidiano do recém-nascido; Saberes utilizados diante das doenças do recém-nascido. Os saberes relatados e sua influência nos cuidados ao recém-nascido foram: orações e benzimentos, chás de ervas variadas, crendices relacionadas aos cuidados com o coto umbilical, soluços e alterações do sono. **Conclusão:** as mães não confiam plenamente no uso de práticas baseadas em saberes populares, dando, pois, crédito às orientações dadas pelos profissionais da saúde. **Descritores:** Cuidado da criança, Medicina tradicional, Promoção da saúde, Enfermagem.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** verificar la influencia del conocimiento popular en el cuidado del recién nacido, centrándose en la de la salud de los niños promoción. **Métodos:** Estudio con enfoque cualitativo, que se celebró en el hospital público de maternidad de la Imperatriz-Maranhão, con 15 madres de recién nacidos. Para recoger los datos mediante un cuestionario y entrevistas semi-estructuradas con análisis de contenido temático. **Resultados:** las categorías de conocimiento emergentes utilizados en la limpieza del muñón umbilical, conocimiento utilizado para alimentar a los recién nacidos, el conocimiento de las prácticas utilizadas en la atención diaria de los recién nacidos, conocimiento utilizado sobre las enfermedades del recién nacido. El conocimiento informado y su influencia en la atención del recién nacido fueron las oraciones y bendiciones, creencias infusiones variadas relacionadas con el cuidado del cordón umbilical, el hipo y los trastornos del sueño. **Conclusión:** las madres no dependen en gran medida el uso de prácticas basadas en el conocimiento popular, dando, para el crédito a las directrices impartidas por profesionales de la salud. **Descriptor:** Cuidado de niños, Medicina tradicional, Promoción de la salud, Enfermería.

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## INTRODUCTION

The care is inherent in human beings, but care practices may vary according to the beliefs and experiences of each. It is connected to all the activities, processes and decisions that are addressed to a person, group or community in a state of health or disease, providing assistance, protection and development levels in biological, psycho-spiritual and socio-cultural. The nursing actions develop health promotion, demonstrating the essence of caring profession through educational activities, with the intention that the sharing of knowledge collaborate positively in the care of each individual.<sup>1-2</sup>

Care practices are transmitted between generations, particularly among women, from mother to daughter, whose meaning contribute to keeping alive the customs and traditions female. During maternity such practices are full of symbols and meanings, and both are intended to communicate or express the perception of health and illness and social roles to be defined or redefined, as an aid in symbolic reorganization to incorporate new: newborn (RN) and the new mother.<sup>3</sup>

In recent decades the science presented important technological advances that contributed to the diagnosis and treatment of many diseases. Despite this progress in technical and scientific development of health, it is still insufficient to eliminate, in different population groups, the presence of popular knowledge and beliefs tied to traditions that are passed between generations for maintaining health.<sup>4</sup>

From this perspective, the popular knowledge practices are used by families and the community by laypersons in the apprehension of knowledge in daily builds and are also transmitted from generation to generation. Appear entrenched, especially in the lives of women and

the community where they live, being transmitted and guided by more experienced people, and used as the first choice in health care for injuries, particularly in child care.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the popular wisdom is the initial choice for the treatment of numerous diseases where current technologies in health do not become accessible to people who need them urgently. Literature itself reiterates that various diseases can be ameliorated or treated by preparations of natural origin and many medicines are available source of fresh supplies. Faced with the need of new concepts that meet the expectations of the communities, nursing along with other sciences, must recognize the importance of popular knowledge for growth and share appreciation humanized health, related to a paradigm "based on a more inclusive and holistic face of reality."<sup>3,5</sup>

Although many of the popular knowledge does not have scientific proof of its efficacy, repeated experiences of its use among populations allow validate its usefulness, justifying as motivation to get them to use unconventional knowledge relating to health, and, in a way general, independent of scientific proof.<sup>6</sup>

Given this finding, it is urgent to search and translate the knowledge used by the community, so that they can be compared to the evidence for the treatment and prevention of diseases in children. The Ottawa Charter brings the concept of health promotion, which means providing conditions for the people to make them able to improve their health and exercise control over it. In this context, the nurse must act to share and provide adequate guidance on caring for children, guided by the responsibility and, especially scientific knowledge, contributing effectively to the inclusion of these actions by caregivers in order to strengthen their skills personal and enable them to care for the child.<sup>7-8</sup>

In this perspective, the use of popular knowledge in the care of newborns can lead you to health complications due to be immunologically susceptible to external aggressions of substances, objects and pathogens, so it is essential to promote health actions aimed at maintaining health the child to parents employing appropriate care.<sup>8-9</sup>

It is therefore necessary to understand the meaning of health promotion in the communities where membership and motivation to change habits, behaviors and cultural practices are not modeled passively. Thus there is a need to understand the factors involved in the change of behavior of the learner to treatment guidelines and health shared by understanding the culture, the environment and the social and material limitations, so that health promotion is based on exchanges integrating scientific knowledge and popular knowledge of health.<sup>9</sup>

In this sense the nurse needs to review the strategies for promoting child health for planning and directing the activities before the popular knowledge used by households, such that identify and understand the practice of care of the mothers, and assist in promoting comprehensive care, to rescue, recover and make sure of their evidence, with attention to the partner families. Thus, the study aimed to investigate the influence of popular knowledge in the care of infants, focusing on the promotion of child health.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study<sup>10</sup> conducted between the months of October and November 2011 in a maternity clinic in the city of Imperatriz, Maranhão. Motherhood is chosen large; reference the areas of obstetrics and neonatology not only for the city but also for Empress of the southwestern counties of the state of Maranhão and the southern states of Tocantins and Para.

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Participants were 15 mothers of infants who use the services of the clinic. Participants were selected by convenience; the choice was ease of access for data collection to be curricular field of Undergraduate Nursing, Federal University of Maranhão, which facilitated the development of technical and operational research.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interview, which contemplated the practical issues of care taken with the newborn in relation to hygiene, nutrition, presence of disease, care of the umbilical stump. A tape recorder was used to record the testimonies of participants in order to transcribe them with greater reliability.

For the organization, presentation and analysis of the data the information was transcribed and analyzed using the technique of content analysis consists of three steps: Pre-analysis, material exploration, processing of results. So the categories that emerged from the study: Knowledge used in cleaning the umbilical stump; Knowledge used in feeding the newborn; Knowledge used practices in routine care of the newborn; Knowledge used against diseases of the newborn.

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University Hospital of the Federal University of Maranhão under protocol 225/11 at its meeting on August 29, 2011. The participants had guarded anonymity, were identified by names of exotic flowers. In addition, authorized their voluntary participation by signing two copies of the Statement Consent, as recommended by the Resolution 196/96.<sup>12</sup>

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Study participants were aged between 19 and 48 years. In relation to religion and marital status, 11 declared themselves Catholic, these five are married and six singles, four reported being evangelical, three married and one single.

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With regard to education, two have incomplete primary education, three finished elementary school, seven incompleting high school, two secondary education and a teaching degree. It should be noted that most participants have education less than 12 years of study.

She takes milk NAN, I along with mass, because she breast from the beginning, my mother had to give (Celosia). I do what my mother who has more experience tells [...] Using the same porridge is giving sustain, gives strength, and the child is not hungry all the time crying (Daisy).

#### **Popular knowledge used in the cleaning of the umbilical stump**

The mothers interviewed showed achieve the hygiene of the umbilical stump of newborns as the guidance provided by health professionals. However, despite following these recommendations, reaffirming also use popular knowledge longstanding tested and certified by the community, as evidenced by the following statements:

To achieve satisfactory care practices, mothers acquire knowledge, experience and expertise in living with people who teach them to care. It stands out in the study, the constant presence of the mother and the mother as references in time to answer questions about food, being very present during the execution of care and have extensive experience in caring for children, especially in relation to food type being offered to the RN to quench it.

Navel put 70% alcohol put there to heal a little bit and put castor jalapa powder, so I learned (Angelica). I put 70% alcohol (...), using, for example, in the navel, glue to put it to heal pretty quickly (Daisy). I put 70% alcohol, but also put cotton sheet that helps to dry the navel down soon (Celosia).

#### **Popular knowledge used in everyday practices of care to the newborn**

It is observed that mothers use the information from their environment without first assessing the risks that the newborn may be predisposed, yet they have received information on conduct scientifically proven. It is noticed that some practices still offer health hazards of child and deserve an intervention.

In the analysis of the interviews carried, it was found that besides the technical care such as feeding and sanitize, mothers also use other practices in the care of infants, based on the popular knowledge from their families, or their own life experiences, though not have scientific confirmation.

To pass the hiccup I give the chest and sometimes I put a small red piece of paper on her forehead (Estrelícia). I do a superstition that the older they always do against hiccup, I do not know if it works: put cotton on the forehead and give the titty, at the same time passing hiccup (Astromeia). When she's with hiccup, I put a leaf of rue forehead (Celosia).

#### **Popular knowledge used in the feeding of the newborn**

According to the mothers interviewed the belief that there is little weak milk or milk causes complement breastfeeding the newborn or even replace breast milk with formula milk, mainly because mothers associate this situation with the cry of child.

Also according to some mothers, it is common to resort to herbal teas, to treat the causes of hiccups, showing that folk medicine is still very present in our society and is characterized, for example, when mothers even before instrumentalize care use to some sort of popular appeal in order to resolve or alleviate the health problems of their children. The statement below can demonstrate this point:

She breast and give warm milk, NAN [...] It's because she feels hungry, cries a lot and chest you cannot kill hunger it, and when I give her milk NAN she keeps calm (Allium).

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I give tea of chamomile, fennel, mint, and raisins. With water only hiccup is nothing even with some tea (Celosia).

Regarding the handling of belongings RN and forms general handling of the child, mothers reported they do not lead to an imbalance in child health, as one sees below:

I learned that you cannot twist the diaper, because it can give winepress (Allium). I wash my clothes by hand, and not put in the sun, do not twist to avoid stomachache (Celosia).

Look when I bathe her in the tub she did not play hard in the water, play slowly so as not to give headache (Cherry).

In the present study, these concerns appear strongly rooted in these women's lives and the community where they live, being transmitted and guided by more experienced people, and are used by them as first choice in an attempt to avoid health problems in newborns.

Even as a practice of routine care, mothers describe some aspects that facilitate sleep RN, as the use of artificial teats, pacifiers, and teas, as seen in the statements below:

Put on your lap, give a pacifier, chamomile tea if you must, with that she calms down, and sleeps (Tulipa).  
(...) Give him some tea sleep at night (Flox).

Another type of routine care reported by mothers in this study refers to the fact that they believe in the existence of negative forces in the environment, or data from other people, that may favor the child's illness. Thus, it is perceived to be the routine use of beliefs and objects in the newborn, they believe prevent it possible these negative forces, rebalancing and maintaining the good health of the child. The statements that follow can demonstrate this behavior:

I told the woman to pray when the baby was chipping. It's because chipping kills (Allium).

The red ribbon use against evil [...] My mother said when I was little she placed, and then asked to put on my son and I left (anemone).

Only when she's behest pray with chipping and put the tape against evil (Estrelícia).

The speeches of the participants translate forms of child care permeated the beliefs, values, customs and experiences shared between generations, thus constituting the popular system of care that is influenced by the diversity of values, beliefs and cultural practices.

#### **Popular knowledge used before diseases of the newborn**

For mothers, the diseases are divided into two types: those expected, own the neonatal period like cramps, and the unexpected or atypical neonatal period.

In the study refer mothers to use different herbal teas to prevent and relieve abdominal cramps newborn. For them, the credibility given to this practice results from diverse cultural experiences experienced by people experienced imposing family trust for the use of popular knowledge. The statements show the importance of family and social context in the adoption of care practices related to infant health. On this point, the participants revealed:

When she hurts her belly my mother sends jalapa give powdered milk to see if it improves. And Vick tea, peppermint, chamomile, all she says is that good I use (Angelica).

[...] To the question of colic, do some tea mint, garlic, my mother made when all the children had a tummy ache (Astromeia).

While some mothers have reported the use of tea for the relief of colic in infants, a small portion of the respondents prefer to only follow the recommendations of health professionals, as can be seen from the speech:

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I massage the belly when she has winepress and give medicine that the doctor prescribed (Flox).

Just put her to keep warm in my belly every time I have a stomachache (Estrelícia).

In cases of atypical disease of the newborn mothers report that initially turn immediately to health professionals, supported by the weakness of RN, where the use of popular knowledge, without any medical supervision becomes harmful to children's health.

When she gave birth child that bubble, then took the doctor (...), not used home remedy because I was worried, not to hurt her, I was afraid because she was sick. I did not want to put anything that people teach, then took her to a pediatrician (Celosia).

She is allergic but do not know what it is not. Already she consulted and had no result, and then the doctor spent two ointments, was even passing water, not served. Then again brought to consult (Tulipa).

His eye was sick. It took me to see, I think safer, and medicine has improved (Gardenia).

The statements allow us to understand the knowledge that these women should not be disregarded, nor their conduct must be judged before seeking to understand them. Therefore, it becomes essential for the actions of promoting the health of families, initiating dialogue, creating spaces for discussion and giving them opportunity to elucidate their views, their behaviour and their knowledge. Thus, there is the possibility of implementing actions aimed at improving the quality of life of children and at the same time promote the work of health professionals.

Child care requires the involvement of all actors involved in the care process mother, family and health professionals where each party contributes its knowledge, experience, attitudes, intuition and critical thinking for the promotion of child health. In this perspective, it is natural that

mothers, assuming most child care emphasize that to achieve satisfactory care practices, need to have knowledge, experience and knowledge that are acquired in contact with people who teach them to care.<sup>14</sup>

In this sense, some made with child care become solely a reflection of the daily learning and shared among family and community. For the care of the umbilical stump, for example, the literature recommends only using 70% alcohol as a substance for disinfection after daily cleaning with mild soap and water. The actions of health promotion should emphasize at this point that the use of different substances directly under the stump can cause many problems to the newborn, including the risk for toxicity and neonatal tetanus.

Being the umbilical stump a favorable environment for the growth of bacteria, highlights the importance of nursing actions in regard to hygiene care for the prevention of infections.<sup>6,14-5</sup>

Before the implementation of care, mothers are going uniting weaving and scientific knowledge with popular structures in the care of the child's body, a fusion of multiple knowledge. While scientific knowledge are guided by the scientific-technical experimentation, knowledge on the popular agenda of positive results from the use of such practices.<sup>14</sup>

Amid the reports of the study, it is possible to see that the popular knowledge and practices guided by health professionals to child care are followed by mothers concomitantly. Mothers, on most occasions, despite receiving guidance from health professionals remain popular care recommended by their mothers, in-law or neighbors, because they consider them referrals for child care, because they have experience to assist in the care child, are near them, living in the same house or neighborhood and bolster them

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when they seek help, answers or even advice on how to proceed with the child.<sup>14-5</sup>

Thus, the popular knowledge are perpetuated in various dimensions of care, contemplating immediate basic needs of the child and consolidating enter the community. For food, diverse knowledge are diffused among the mothers, said as efficient for the health of the child, although the phase experienced by the child requires consistent power to your body, as in the phase for exclusive breastfeeding (EBF). Considering, therefore, that breastfeeding is also a practical hybrid cultural, social networks that form between families and neighborhood relations are decisive in adopting or not the practice of AME child.<sup>13</sup>

The AME is given to the child at six months of age, because they contain all the essential nutrients for the age group: vitamins, minerals, besides aiding in immunity. Unfortunately, it is not always considered ideal for the child by the mother, since the child will receive only breastmilk and no other liquid or solid food, with the exception of drops or syrups, vitamins, mineral supplements or medicines. Therefore, it constitutes a challenge to the promotion of children's health spread such benefits of human milk and persuading mothers to use it as a primary food resource for children that just need it.<sup>14</sup>

In this perspective, as the careful food is also transmitted from generation to generation, from mother to daughter, permeate beliefs, values, customs and experiences, it is necessary to approach this popular knowledge greatly care comprising this diversity of values, beliefs and practices cultural.<sup>8</sup>

The feeding of children in the North East has a strong influence of the few living conditions in the backcountry, the difficulties arising from the purchase of food and regional geography practically nonexistent economic resources by R. pesq.: cuid. fundam. online 2013. abr./jun. 5(2):3626-35

promoting the use intergenerational family of foods that promote the fullness of a child long period of the day, instead of the exclusive use of human milk that brings in elements of its properties easy digestibility raising the child repeatedly appetite.<sup>15</sup>

The most popular among families is considered the knowledge gained from experience and loaded with feelings, emotions and skills, where participants share experiences of care, concepts and practices. The adoption of popular knowledge is due to the ease of access to them, and especially to the people who recommend that in addition to being near people who are prescribing issue and show it to your wisdom to the community forward.<sup>9</sup>

Among the knowledge used in healthcare RN, the use of herbs to treat disease is traditional among families because of the cultural diffusion of the possible healing properties and ease of acquisition, where most of the farming families in the backyards of households. Soon, those who use them do not care about the scientific treatment of disease, but with the answers already known to their needs during health hazards.<sup>15</sup>

Some practices stemming from the popular knowledge Sleeping child are commonly used, such as the use of pacifiers and bottle nipples to. The use of nozzles is widely opposed by health professionals, especially during sleep due to choking hazards. There is also the negative interference on breastfeeding, to contribute to early weaning, and thus fought their use. Also, consider yourselves still other harmful effects to the health of the child, such as dental problems, speech therapy and contamination.<sup>4,11,15</sup>

Taking the NB to bless is a practice in the study perceived as effective for your protection. In a similar study conducted with fishermen's wives, bless the child was identified as a health

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care practice essential to prevent the evil spirit that manifests itself in the body of the child.<sup>9</sup>

A belief is a faith, believe in the ear is said and incorporate this thinking to everyday life. Belief shows how to be who owns it. Medicine religious part of the socio-cultural and often is influenced by family or social groups. Belonging to a historical process, can survive even in the face of technological innovations of today.<sup>6,9</sup>

The use of herbs is widespread in popular culture through the practices of family members and the appointment of people who have used them. Besides credibility and ease of access to herbs, both at reduced cost as the proximity of the people who recommend another aspect facilitator of adopting this approach is the difficulty of access to services and health professionals. The herbs are used to cure illnesses since the dawn of humanity by numerous active ingredients that have successful assurance and utilization between generations. They are used even unaware of the existence of possible toxic effects or their therapeutic action.<sup>6,14</sup>

Currently, the use of herbs with medicinal purposes has become an object of research to confirm its chemical properties in curing diseases. In this perspective, actions to promote child health have key role in the dissemination of those who have known therapeutic potential. Especially given the difficulties of access to health services, poor quality of care that does not meet the expectations and demands of the users directly contribute to the use of herbs.<sup>15</sup>

In response to the results, it is clear that the search for the Unified Health System (SUS) mothers want satisfactory answers almost immediately to the clinical picture that motivated the search for care. When the indicated treatment by health professionals does not succeed, there is a substitution treatment indicated for care based on popular knowledge.<sup>12-3</sup>

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It is possible to conclude that the diversification of forms of care makes every single mother, to solve the ills that affect the healthy state of the newborn, since the way it is directed such care is influenced by popular knowledge, which makes up the cultural context, in which it operates. Given this reality, the nurse must prioritize actions for health promotion and disease prevention in the first days of life the newborn in order to contribute to minimum odds of getting sick child when it is used practices based on common sense.<sup>3,6</sup>

The actions of health promotion that unify the popular and the scientific knowledge are still developed by nursing so shy, especially with regard to children's health. For the child's attention so humanized and individualized, based on the promotion of health and wholeness, one cannot dissociate the educational and cultural context which incorporates both mother and child. You must understand and respect their ways of life and use of knowledge of the environment where they live, and thus provide better care to your child, with the use of health education strategies congruent with the reality of their community. Thus, the nurse practice must always be permeated reflections so that it can turn causing changes.<sup>2,6-7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The study can understand that among the practices of care based on the popular knowledge that most were highlighted were the use of herbal teas, the practice of blessing the child and even the use of various substances and objects to remedy the discomfort caused by intestinal cramps and sobs.

Faced with this observation, care based on the popular wisdom, pervades the daily lives of mothers, for these are the main protagonists of different ways to care for their children. While



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most of these practices are not scientifically recommended by health professionals, are routinely used, as they are guided by the experience of mothers or women that surround the medium in which they are embedded.

The study revealed that knowledge and care practices of mothers are built and driven by both scientific knowledge as the popular saying that allowing the popular and scientific practices permeate health care.

It is noteworthy that a small portion of the respondents did not fully trust in the use of these practices, especially when the infant is sick, giving therefore credit guidelines given by health professionals, and motivated by the concept of risk that certain practices can lead to NB.

Thus, it is important that knowledge to care for children is built between the knowledge of health professionals and popular. The attention to alternative possibilities of treatment leads to an improvement in the attendance of the population by the Unified Health System, because otherwise provide treatment and prevention. Health professionals should incorporate into their actions to promote health in the community the set of attitudes, values and beliefs that constitute a whole philosophy of life.

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