

# CUIDADO É FUNDAMENTAL

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RESEARCH

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## Professionals' view regarding the transition process from a nurse technician to a nurse

A transição funcional de técnico de enfermagem para enfermeiro na perspectiva do profissional

El transición funcional del técnico de enfermería para enfermeras: desde la perspectiva del profesional

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To describe how the nursing professional handles new assignments and responsibilities, identify and discuss the factors that facilitate and facilitate this transition to nursing work. **Method:** Descriptive, exploratory study with a qualitative approach. Participants were thirteen nursing technicians who underwent functional transition and currently perform functions as nurses. It presents as scenario, surgical units of a university hospital, in rio de janeiro. The ethical and legal aspects of Resolution No. 466/2012 of the CNS approved by the CEP, under No. 1,432,069, were respected. The semi-structured interview was used to analyze the data, and content analysis was performed. **Results:** It presents as categories: the professional nursing technician and the functional transition for nurses and the facilitating and hindering factors in the functional transition. **Conclusion:** The functional transition meets the need of the technician in the search for scientific knowledge, professional growth and personal evolution.

**Descriptors:** Functional transition, Nurses, Nursing technician.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Descrever como o profissional de enfermagem lida com novas atribuições e responsabilidades, identificar e discutir os fatores facilitadores e dificultadores dessa transição para o trabalho de enfermagem. **Método:** Estudo descritivo, exploratório com abordagem

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qualitativa. Os participantes foram treze técnicos de enfermagem que passaram pela transição funcional e atualmente desenvolvem funções enquanto enfermeiros. Apresenta como cenário, unidades cirúrgicas de um hospital universitário, no rio de janeiro. Foram respeitados os aspectos éticos e legais da resolução nº466/2012 do CNS aprovado pelo CEP, com o nº 1.432.069. Utilizou-se a entrevista semiestruturada, para análise dos dados, realizou-se a análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** Apresenta como categorias: o profissional técnico de enfermagem e a transição funcional para enfermeiro e os fatores facilitadores e dificultadores na transição funcional. **Conclusão:** A transição funcional atende a necessidade do técnico na busca por conhecimento científico, crescimento profissional e evolução pessoal.

**Descritores:** Transição funcional, Enfermeiros, Técnico de enfermagem.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivos:** describir cómo el profesional de enfermería trata con nuevas asignaciones y responsabilidades, identificar y debatir los factores facilitadores y obstaculizadores de esta transición al trabajo de enfermería.

**Método:** estudio descriptivo, exploratorio con enfoque cualitativo. Los participantes fueron trece técnicos de enfermería que pasaron por la transición funcional y actualmente desarrollan funciones como enfermeros. Presenta como escenografía, unidades quirúrgicas de un hospital universitario en Río de Janeiro. Se respetaron los aspectos éticos y jurídicos de la resolución no 466/2012 del CNS aprobada por el CEP, con el párrafo 1.432.069. La entrevista interestructurada se utilizó para el análisis de los datos, se realizó el análisis del contenido. **Resultados:** presenta como categorías: el técnico profesional de enfermería y la transición funcional a la enfermería y a los facilitadores y factores que dificultan la transición funcional. **Conclusión:** la transición funcional satisface la necesidad del técnico en la búsqueda para el conocimiento científico, el crecimiento profesional y la evolución personal.

**Descritores:** Transición funcional, Enfermeros, técnico de enfermería.

## INTRODUCTION

This study aims to understand the nurses' view of the transition from a nursing technician to a nurse, how they see themselves during this transition considering the new and great challenges, and how the team members see them.

The professional nursing practice is regulated by Law 7.498 of June 25, 1986, which establishes that all professionals must be qualified by their regional councils to practice their profession. Only nurses (higher education), nursing technicians (high school/technical education), nursing assistant (elementary school) and midwives can work in this area, but the nursing assistant category is no longer accepted by law. Each nursing category has a unique qualification model and assignments.<sup>1</sup>

The transition from a technician to a graduate has become increasingly frequent, especially with the ease of access to universities. All social classes are participating in this process. Professionals are seeking intellectual and personal growth, that is, new knowledge, challenges, and better wages. Thus, there is a gradual increase in the number of professionals who go through this process and seek the best for themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Nurses can experience positive and negative consequences of this transition. For example, the nursing team's members can disrespect nurses that previously worked as nursing

technicians at the same workplace. Nevertheless, these nurses can manage this situation by showing their value.

Thus, this study aims to characterize the a from nursing technician to a nurse and answer the following questions: "Do nurses know how to deal with the new duties and responsibilities?"; "Professionals on a new assignment can act as the nursing team leader?"; "How do nurses see themselves as a team member?"; and "How does the nursing teams see nurses who were in another professional category?"

The following objectives emerged from these questions: (1) describing how nurses deal with new assignments and responsibilities; (2) identifying the factors that ease or hinder this transition; and (3) discuss this process in the context of nursing work.

The study aims to understand the professionals' view of nurses after job transition. The new job requires decision making and attitude from nurses.

Currently, the number of nursing technicians seeking professional growth has increased. In fact, more nursing technicians are attending nursing schools in universities, and the skilled ones can be hired after graduation. Therefore, we sought to carry out this study to show how these professionals are seen by health teams which followed them throughout this transition.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The nursing education began in 1860 in England during the Crimean War (1854-1856) with Florence Nightingale, considered the greatest precursor of modern nursing.<sup>3</sup>

In Brazil, sick people were cared for by slaves and later by religious people, sisters, and volunteers. Thus, a woman named Ana Néri, from *Bahia* State, cared for men in the war of Paraguay in the 19th century and took the first step towards the nursing practice in Brazil. Then, nursing was stimulated through Wanda Aguiar Horta, who applied the Maslow's Basic Human Needs Theory in São Paulo in the 1970s. This theory was based on five stages of work methodology: data collection (nursing history), diagnosis, planning, prescription, and prognosis (evaluation).<sup>4</sup>

Nurses must be aware and willing to accept and take responsibility for leading nursing teams, fulfilling their commitment as a leader: knowing each member; identifying individual differences; collaborating to meet the group needs; and recognizing different skills, attitudes, and feelings. Furthermore, nurses working as team leaders need leadership skills to make their work effective, since leadership influences all nursing activity.<sup>5</sup>

In short, leading means investing in people, facilitating their development, creativity, and self-realization for a better future; being able to face the future with confidence, daring and flexibility; having interpersonal skills; having organizational knowledge; investing time and energy into the future of the institution and its staff; delegating power to others so that they can achieve their goals; and developing self-esteem, enthusiasm, and ideals among the other team members.<sup>6</sup>

Communication among group members, practical knowledge, the interpretation of reality, and everyday knowledge result in common-sense knowledge, which is a specific form of Social Representation.<sup>7</sup>

## METHODS

This is a descriptive, exploratory study with a qualitative approach. Descriptive research aims to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> In qualitative studies, there is an impossibility of investigating and understanding by statistical data some phenomena focused on perception, intuition, and subjectivity. Also, they completely focus on investigating the meanings of human relations, in which their actions are influenced by emotions or feelings related to experienced situations.

This study was carried out in four surgical units from a hospital in the municipality of *Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro* State, Brazil. The participants were 13 nurses who were nursing technicians and went through a job transition.

This study obeyed the Resolution 466/12 of the Brazilian Ministry of Health, which provides guidelines about research involving human beings, and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under No. 1.432.069.<sup>9</sup>

Each participant signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), in which the research objectives were clarified. The participants were labeled by capital letters (A, B, C, etc.) to preserve their confidentiality and anonymity.<sup>9</sup>

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection,<sup>8</sup> resulting in two categories: "The nursing technician and the transition to work as a nurse" and "Factors that ease or hinder the job transition".<sup>8</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Job transitions in the nursing area is a reality. Nursing teams—and their leaders—need to actively participate in this process to qualify their work.

The study participants were 11 women and two men, who started to work as nurses from four months to seven years after their graduation.

### The nursing technician and the transition to work as a nurse

The interviewees' speech revealed that the reason for attending a nursing undergraduate course was the interest for professional growth:

*After I completed the technical nursing course, we wanted to learn more about the job aiming at professional evolution. (A)*

*In fact, I started attending the undergraduate course because I had different opinions and I wanted to have another vision, a different view of how to take care. (D)*

In addition to skills, the need for scientific knowledge arises as an important factor for providing practical care:

*The main thing is that you focus more on scientific knowledge rather than techniques, because as a technician you deal more with the technique and as a nurse you learn a lot about the reasons for applying it, you know more the scientific part. (F)*

*Certainly the professional growth, evolving and conquering a space. (M)*

Acquiring scientific knowledge is not enough for job transition. Nurses need to willingly accept and assume the responsibility of leading nursing teams, meeting their role as leaders: knowing each team member; identifying individual differences; collaborating to meet the group's needs; and recognizing different abilities, attitudes, and feelings of their collaborators.<sup>5</sup> Nursing technicians do not have these assignments.

Attending the nursing undergraduate courses was easier for nursing technicians because they already had technical knowledge, which can facilitate their search for a nursing job. The following statement illustrates this argument:

*I thought it would be easier because I was already a technician, so I thought it would be easier for me to get a job and. I also enjoy my profession. (H)*

This technical background is of great importance because nurses have to lead the nursing team, teach them, manage the health care units, and do more complex activities. Thus, they need to keep the team always united and committed to working.<sup>10</sup>

*Taking on the new role was very satisfying as it came as a result of an effort to achieve professional growth. (H)*

We noticed that the study participants tried to deal with the job transition in the most natural way possible; however, they knew that it was a complex process requiring patience, as the following statements indicate:

*Dealing with the transition process is not so simple, but I need to be honest with the team and work hard to show that I am capable of. (G)*

*I think I need a lot of strength to deal with this situation, but I'm showing the team that it can go right to work. (B)*

The participants showed that the transition from a nursing technician to a nurse made their career grow. They also felt satisfied with studying and working at the same time to reach their goal.

## Factors that ease or hinder the job transition

According to the nurses, being a nursing technician helped in the job transition. This technical experience also helped the nursing team face everyday problems:

*The previous job as a technician helped me because it added scientific knowledge to practice, you have the knowledge, but not the scientific knowledge that the academy gives to you. (F)*

Additionally, since the study participants already had technical skills for certain procedures, it became easier for them to work as nurses, facilitating their learning and professional growth. However, the scientific knowledge, techniques, and procedures learned in nursing undergraduate courses still are valuable because they provide a greater understanding of the nursing skills, as can be seen in the following statement:

*About the experience as a technician, it helped me do a lot of things because I already knew it, maybe it would be more difficult for me if I didn't have this experience. (C)*

The interviewees pointed out that other undergraduate colleagues who never worked in a hospital environment often had more difficulty developing some practices:

*The facilitating factor, undoubtedly this technical experience helped me a lot, I already worked as a technician, so this made my undergraduate course much easier, I already knew many procedures and it ends up that the technicians are technically ahead than people attending college but aren't technicians. (A)*

Regarding the factors that hinder the job transition, there is the issue of leadership, in which nurses must have another posture, since they have functions of greater responsibility and complexity, and manage nursing teams and departments. Their new assignments are completely different from those of the old job.

Some interviewees reported that they were able to undergo this transition while working in a nursing team and faced challenges because some of the members did not understand this work change.

*People don't understand that you need to have another posture as a nurse. There are some jokes like, Oh, you're doing it because now you're a nurse. (L)*

*That now I wanted to be smart, I wanted to be the owner of the truth. (E)*

*We have a lot of trouble, when you take on a team and the members know you were a nursing technician, they already look at you with mistrust. (H)*

*At other times they think that you have to do the job of a nursing technician because you did this job before. (L)*

*The biggest difficulty was not understanding that now I needed to have another posture as a nurse. (K)*

On the other hand, some statements pointed out the importance of being accepted by a receptive and helpful nursing team as a member with new assignments:

*Some people found it interesting, it's nice to be learning more. (D)*

*It was all good, I thank very much to everyone, I feel fulfilled in front of my team nowadays. (A)*

*They welcomed me, I had no problem. (D)*

Nurses carrying out administrative activities and managing the clients' assistance needs to have leadership skills to work effectively because leadership influences all nursing activities.<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge, posture, attitude, and leadership for dealing with the everyday challenges are the qualities that highlight the nurses' work because they have greater responsibilities; yet, there are team members that do not recognize the nurses' importance.

All research participants reported facing new challenges every day and triumphing over them. Nevertheless, they exposed the difficult job transition from a nursing technician to a nurse, involving attitude changes because they take on the role of team leader. Furthermore, they pointed out that with good leadership is possible to face adverse situations since the team leaders are nurses, the reference point for the members, and they have attitude and a good relationship with the other members, it becomes easier for them to maintain unity with good interpersonal relationships.

## CONCLUSIONS

Job transitions in nursing care need improvements. Therefore, this study may contribute to this process by making us develop a critical, mature, and human view on leadership issues faced by nurses.

This study's results showed that professionals seek job transition from a nursing technician to a nurse for professional growth or for knowledge, but the most important factor is to understand that all of them are searching for professional and personal evolution.

The participants also pointed out the factors that facilitated or hindered the job transition. The team's acceptance was an easing factor, which helped them face the new challenges. Regarding the difficulties, leadership poses greater challenges, since it is related to attitude, behavior, and decision making. Facing these situations

requires professional skill in knowing how to handle the everyday challenges, also involving leadership and respect.

This study allowed us to perceive the responsibility not only of health institutions, but also of the educational ones in the job transition from a nurse technician to a nurse, considering individual and collective aspects for improving the quality of care.

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