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RESEARCH

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NURSE'S CONTRIBUTION TO BREASTFEEDING IN BASIC ATTENTION

Contribuição do enfermeiro ao aleitamento materno na atenção básica

Contribución de la enfermera a la lactancia materna en la atención básica

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study's purpose has been to analyze the nurse's contribution towards breastfeeding in primary care. **Methods:** It is a descriptive-exploratory study with a qualitative approach, which was performed with 20 primary care users in their lactation period who were registered in a Family Health Unit from the João Pessoa city, Paraíba State, Brazil. Data collection took place at the women's home by using a semi-structured instrument during interviews. The speeches were transcribed in full and the data were analyzed according to the Content Analysis Technique. The study was approved under the *Certificado de Apresentação para Apreciação Ética (CAAE)* [Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appreciation] No. 65820217.7.00005176. **Results:** Through the analysis of the statements, the two following thematic categories have arisen: Nurses' contributions towards breastfeeding promotion during prenatal care; and, The puerperal visit as an instrument for breastfeeding promotion. **Conclusion:** The nurse plays a fundamental role in guiding breastfeeding in primary care, performing promotion actions during prenatal care, and towards the puerperal visit as well. **Descriptors:** Nursing, Breast Feeding, Women's Health, Family Health Strategy.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar a contribuição do enfermeiro para o aleitamento materno na atenção básica. **Métodos:** Trata-se de um estudo exploratório e descritivo, com abordagem qualitativa, realizado com 20 usuárias em período de lactação que estão cadastradas em uma Unidade de Saúde da Família do município de João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brasil. A coleta de dados foi realizada no domicílio das mulheres, mediante entrevista, utilizando um instrumento semiestruturado. As falas foram transcritas na íntegra e os dados foram analisados segundo a Técnica de Análise de Conteúdo. O estudo foi aprovado sob Certificado de Apresentação para Apreciação Ética (CAAE)

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65820217.7.00005176. **Resultados:** Emergiram duas categorias temáticas Contribuições do enfermeiro para a promoção do aleitamento materno durante o pré-natal e A visita puerperal como instrumento para a promoção do aleitamento materno. **Conclusão:** O enfermeiro apresenta um papel fundamental na orientação sobre ao aleitamento materno na atenção básica, desempenhando ações de promoção ainda durante o pré-natal e se estendendo até a visita puerperal.

Descritores: Enfermagem, Aleitamento Materno, Saúde da Mulher, Estratégia Saúde da Família.

RESUMÉN

Objetivo: analizar la contribución de la enfermera a la lactancia materna en la atención primaria. **Métodos:** Este es un estudio exploratorio y descriptivo, con un enfoque cualitativo, realizado con 20 usuarias en período de lactancia que están registradas en una Unidad de Salud Familiar en la ciudad de João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brasil. La recolección de datos se realizó en el hogar de mujeres, a través de una entrevista, utilizando un instrumento semiestructurado. Los discursos se transcribieron en su totalidad y los datos se analizaron de acuerdo con la técnica de análisis de contenido. El estudio fue aprobado por *Certificado de Apresentação para Apreciação Ética* (CAAE) 65820217.7.00005176. **Resultados:** surgieron dos categorías temáticas: las contribuciones de las enfermeras a la promoción de la lactancia materna durante la atención prenatal y la visita puerperal como instrumento para la promoción de la lactancia materna. **Conclusión:** las enfermeras desempeñan un papel fundamental en la orientación sobre la lactancia materna en la atención primaria, realizando acciones de promoción incluso durante la atención prenatal y extendiéndose a la visita puerperal.

Descritores: Enfermería, Lactancia Materna, Salud de la Mujer, Estrategia de Salud Familiar.

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is a natural and effective way to establish a bond between mother and child. This strategy is defended by the World Health Organization because it brings numerous benefits to the child's health, such as the development of the cognitive and autoimmune system, which directly favors the low neonatal mortality rate, and is also linked to the good physical and emotional health status of the mother.¹

Although the benefits of breastfeeding are proven, especially when it occurs exclusively, this practice is still little valued by the general population, which causes a reduction in the prevalence rates of breastfeeding in Brazil, requiring the effective performance of health professionals to change this scenario.¹

In this sense, it is essential that professionals, even during prenatal care, give instructions and clarifications about breastfeeding and its importance for the mother-child binomial. The nurse must understand and monitor each step of the development of a pregnancy, passing on all information during consultations and assisting at the time of breastfeeding, which will allow the formation of a bond of trust and respect that will promote benefits for all involved in this process.²

The breastfeeding period is a process of adapting to a new situation for the woman, and feelings of insecurity and hopelessness may arise. Hence, the monitoring of nurses becomes an important tool to identify the difficulties that may arise during breastfeeding, being able to intervene effectively and discover, together with the mother, what is the best way to live this situation, being the Family Health Strategy (FHS) the best environment for this practice to take effect.³

The FHS presents maternal and child health as one of the main pillars, by monitoring the mother and child from the period of gestation, to growth and development, through actions to promote health and prevent diseases and injuries, highlighting them if breastfeeding is an important strategy for improving the health of the mother-child binomial.⁴

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned, this research meant to analyze the nurse's contribution towards breastfeeding in primary care.

METHODS

It is a descriptive-exploratory study with a qualitative approach, which was performed in a Family Health Unit (FHU) from the *João Pessoa* city, *Paraíba* State, Brazil.

The study population consisted of all users in the lactation period who are registered with the respective FHU and the selection of participants occurred for convenience, totaling 20 primary care users.

The following inclusion criteria were considered: being 18 years old or older, having performed prenatal care at the FHU, the child being from zero to one year old and being in the lactation period, regardless of the time spent for breastfeeding. Data collection took place at the women's home, between June and July 2017, through an interview, using a semi-structured instrument containing data for sociodemographic characterization and questions that covered the objective of the study.

The interviews were transcribed in full and the data were analyzed according to the Content Analysis Technique.⁵ Subsequently, the construction of a system of categories was used, seeking to identify the relevant themes and standards. The statements were identified by the letter "I", followed by the ordinal number corresponding to the interview order (I1, I2...), to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

The study met all ethical and legal aspects addressed by the Resolution No. 466/2012 from the National Health Council. The project for this research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee from the *Centro Universitário de João Pessoa (UNIPÊ)*, under the *Certificado de Apresentação para Apreciação Ética (CAAE)* [Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appreciation] No. 65820217.7.00005176. It is noteworthy that all participants were informed about the study and signed the Informed Consent Form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty women participated in this study, most of whom were within the age group from 20 to 29 years old (65.0%), married or common-law marriage (55.0%), with complete high school (55.0%) and who were household women (55.0%), as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 - Sociodemographic characterization of the participating women. João Pessoa city, Paraíba State, 2017. (n=20)

Variable	n	%
Age group		
20 - 29 years old	13	65.0
30 - 40 years old	7	35.0
Marital status		
Single	9	45.0
Married or common-law marriage	11	55.0
Education		
Elementary school	6	30.0
High school	11	55.0
College	3	15.0
Profession/occupation		
household women	11	55.0
Housekeeper	2	10.0
Other	7	35.0
Total	20	100.0

Source: Research data, 2017.

Through the analysis of the statements, the two following thematic categories have arisen: Nurses' contributions towards breastfeeding promotion during prenatal care; and, The puerperal visit as an instrument for breastfeeding promotion.

Category I - Nurses' contributions towards breastfeeding promotion during prenatal care

It is observed that women considered the nurse as a professional who contributed significantly to them adhering to the practice of breastfeeding, through guidance provided during prenatal consultations, which mainly contemplated aspects related to the benefits of breastfeeding. breastfeeding for the mother-child binomial, as evidenced in the statements below:

In all consultations, the nurse talked about breastfeeding, she would elucidate my doubts and always made me safe and confident that I could breastfeed. I thought I couldn't breastfeed, but little by little, with the conversations during consultations, I started to get confidence, today I can breastfeed nicely (...). (16)

She [nurse] handed me a brochure addressing the benefits of breastfeeding and always guided me, showed how the correct handle should be, the time to breastfeed and how I should feed myself to make the milk strong (...). She [nurse] was always helpful and encouraged me a lot to breastfeed my baby with only breast milk for the first six months, and I did it right. (117)

During consultations, the nurse always talked about the importance and benefits of breastfeeding, and that changed my mind about it. Before I thought that breastfeeding was not important and that I could give my son other foods, but I understood that it could get him sick (...). (119)

Nursing consultation during prenatal care has a positive influence on the pregnant woman's understanding of breastfeeding, through the encouragement and support that are provided by the professional, given that the educational and care activities performed, have a greater impact on breastfeeding adherence and reduce the likelihood of new foods being added before the child's sixth month of life.^{6,7}

A study performed with puerperal women in the *Rio Grande do Sul* State showed that previous breastfeeding experiences generate positive or negative expectations according to what was experienced, while primiparous women may have difficulties related to lack of experience.⁸ For these reasons, the guidelines on breastfeeding must be provided by nurses during prenatal care, considering that they aim to prepare women to live this moment with self-confidence and tranquility.^{9,10}

The environment in which the woman lives, her family core and the reception for prenatal care have a direct impact on the interpretations about breastfeeding and are somehow interconnected, since, when the care with breastfeeding starts from the prenatal, the chances of adherence are much greater, being still high when there is family support.^{11,12}

The nurse inserted in the context of primary care has favorable devices to identify the deficiencies of the community concerning breastfeeding, for knowing the reality of each pregnant woman, being able to outline strategies according to each need, guiding on the importance of the act of breastfeeding and involving family members in support for this moment.¹³

Category II - The puerperal visit as an instrument for breastfeeding promotion

The investigated women understood the puerperal visit as a tool that provided greater safety and comfort during breastfeeding, by clarifying doubts and concerns, guidance on the correct grip and the prevention of problems during breastfeeding, among others.

The week I arrived from the maternity ward, the nurse came to visit me and helped me to breastfeed. I thought I knew how to do it, because I always paid attention when she addressed the prenatal care, but when I really went to breastfeed, I faced a lot of difficulty, the baby didn't get it right, I was very frustrated. She helped me make the correct grip and it relieved me, now I am happy to breastfeed my daughter (...). (I01)

The visit made me feel secure, I felt more confident to breastfeed. She elucidated all my doubts and helped me to breastfeed, teaching me the correct way to put the baby on my chest. I thought the visit was very important, because it shows that we can count on her [nurse] to help us (...). (I08)

The first times I breastfed were very difficult, my chest ached all the time and I had the impression that the baby was still hungry. After the nurse came to visit me, I talked about it and she helped me a lot, taught me how to do the picking and breastfeeding, and it relieved the pain. This made me happy to breastfeed (...). I intend to breastfeed until the baby is two years old, because I want my son to grow up strong and healthy. (I15)

This study showed the importance of nurses to encourage breastfeeding during the prenatal period, clarifying about its benefits for the binomial. Thus, for the effectiveness of the teachings during consultations, the puerperal visit is also relevant. On that occasion, the professional and his team can assess the general context in which the mother and child are inserted, identifying the situations that are best suited to the feeding, the good grip, the suction, among others.¹⁴

A breastfeeding support program carried out in China revealed that women felt safer and breastfed effectively after nursing interventions.⁶ During the puerperal visit, the nurse can perform numerous actions to promote breastfeeding, in addition to offering support and necessary support for the mother, because, many times, the woman is fragile, being essential the presence of a professional able to help her.¹⁵

Breastfeeding is a challenging time for most women, including those who have already experienced the experience, since there are always changes from one pregnancy to another. In the case of primiparous women, this challenge is even greater, as there is no similar experience.^{4,16}

The nurse, in the first weeks of breastfeeding, becomes a facilitator for the woman's adaptation to this process, intervening when necessary so that the mother is in good health, physically and psychologically.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is necessary that the professional understand the importance of the family and the social context in which it is inserted,

thus seeking mechanisms that favor effective breastfeeding and make this process as something pleasurable for mother and baby.¹⁸

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Herein, it was observed that nurses play a fundamental role in providing guidance on breastfeeding in primary care, performing promotion actions even during prenatal care and extending to the puerperal visit, given that the consultations carried out during pregnancy generate the opportunity to encourage breastfeeding, clarifying the benefits acquired in this process, from the affective maternal bond to the development of the child's self-defense system. On the other hand, the home visit to provide assistance to the binomial becomes an opportunity to identify the effectiveness of everything that was encouraged about breastfeeding. It is possible to intervene according to the difficulties that are presented at the moment when breastfeeding actually happens.

Bearing in mind the aforesaid, studies on this theme are extremely relevant to underline the importance of the service provided by nurses in primary care, in addition to emphasizing the need for frequent preparation of these professionals to deal with this problem, since the results are presented in a satisfactory manner.

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