



REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE CONSUMPTION OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES BY NURSING WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

In the search for comfort in the face of physical or psychological disturbances due to work, nursing workers use the use of drug therapies, mainly through self-medication, and in particular, to the consumption of Psychoactive Substances (SPAs). To discuss the consumption of psychoactive substances by nursing workers and to reflect on the extent to which these professionals are vulnerable to these substances. This is a reflexive study. The use of psychoactive substances has been propagated by nursing workers as an object of obtaining for the relief, relaxation and escape of suffering that the conditions and the environment in which the nursing work is developed, have caused these individuals. Easy access and handling, coupled with labor disturbances, make them more prone to consumption and hence dependence. The problem of psychoactive substances has permeated social scenarios and its effects have been attractive for the main actors who are considered health promoters and advocates of prevention of the consumption of these substances, nursing.

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INTRODUCTION

Work is understood as the essential activity for the life of man and is associated with the objective and subjective needs of the worker. Thus, the health problems of the worker develop in a multi-causal way, taking into account the interaction between the pathogenic factors (Machado et al., 2014).

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When we focus on health work, the nursing sector is inserted in this context, which is configured as a collective environment, permeated by rules and routines, complex in its organization and in its labor processes, which use bold technologies, sophisticated hospital supplies and have extremely demarcated hierarchical and power relations (Gonçalves et al., 2014). Thus, labor relations and working conditions can interfere in the health of nursing professionals, as they directly influence the appearance and / or development of diseases due to situations of risk such as stress and work overload, to which many professionals are exposed (Forte et

al., 2014). On the basis of this, and in the quest for comfort in the face of physical or psychic disturbances, these workers resort to the use of drug therapies, mainly through self-medication, and in particular to the consumption of Psychoactive Substances (SPAs)(Vieira *et al.*, 2013). In the hospital area, especially, nursing workers are exposed to physical and mental health problems, and when in precarious working conditions associated with daily labor difficulties, they may favor the use of psychoactive substances. Such vulnerability may reflect depression, fatigue, and occupational illnesses, which may lead these professionals to seek alternatives, including self-medication. And by using medicines that alter the state of consciousness, the individual becomes more vulnerable to using other substances. It is like breaking a moral barrier that leads him to try other substances, reaching levels of dependence (Martins, 2004; Oliveira, 2016).

In the daily practice of nursing, professionals deal with various drugs, accumulating empirical knowledge, coming from varied cultures and family practices, and the scientific knowledge, extracted from the undergraduate and graduate courses, causes them to acquire for themselves experiences and knowledge regarding to the use of these drugs in daily therapy (Oliveira, 2014). And within this context, psychoactive substances are included, not only those available in hospital services, but also those illicit drugs. Thus, psychoactive substances are associated with both the concept of narcotics and that of medicine, and may be natural, such as caffeine, nicotine, opium and marijuana, or synthetic, those manufactured in laboratories (Dias *et al.*, 2011). The rhythms and complexities that work has achieved in this modern world alone pose a high risk for the use of psychoactive substances. Both the failure at work and the demands that this imposes when the worker is compromised create favorable conditions for the supposedly unreal world of well-being, tranquility, or power offered by socially accepted drugs such as alcohol, tranquilizers and tobacco, which makes it the most harmful and dangerous factor for health, to which modern society must confront (Martins, 2007). In this sense, and taking into account the growing problem of psychoactive substances consumption in Brazil and in the world, the casuist relation of work and the worker, especially nursing professionals, the following question emerges: what is the relation of the consumption of psychoactive substances between the context of nursing work? Considering this question, this reflexive study aims to discuss the consumption of psychoactive substances among nursing workers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is an article originating from Nursing in Health and Society, from the Postgraduate Program in Nursing of the Federal University of Piauí (PPGenf / UFPI), in which the subject of study was related to the topics discussed in the classroom. It consists of a reflexive approach on the theme: consumption of psychoactive substances by nursing workers. In the construction of this article, at first a narrative survey of the literature on the subject was carried out, which provided an extended and contextualized analysis for such reflection.

RESULTS

After the analysis and reflections, there was a shortage of publications on the subject, which reinforces the need for discussions and further studies on the subject. For a better

understanding, the reflexive analysis was divided and presented in two analytical axes that reflect on the relation and the consequences of the use of psychoactive substances for the nursing worker, which are: Axis I - Nursing work and its relation with the use of psychoactive substances; and Axis II - Psychoactive Substances: risks and consequences for the work and health of the nursing worker.

DISCUSSION

Nursing work and its relation with the use of psychoactive substances: The work is inserted in a meaningful context for the individual, since through his activity of execution he becomes capable of causing transformations, bringing satisfaction and promoting the quality of life of this being in society. However, insofar as their relationship with man is established, work can often lead to various psychosocial disorders, which lead these individuals to seek in the consumption of psychoactive substances a mechanism that brings relief and minimizes suffering and pain of the factors causing this imbalance. Psychoactive substances are substances capable of causing changes in the level of the central nervous system, causing disorders of behavior, mood, consciousness and cognition, while providing effects and sensations of mental and physical relaxation. These substances have been increasingly detected in the workplace environment, because with the demands that have been seen in the world of work, workers, have appropriated the use of these substances as an escape solution for the disturbances caused by the work. Psychological suffering is common among these professionals, and as a strategic way to relieve the pressure felt, nursing workers use psychotropic drugs. Health professionals such as doctors and nurses are professionals who tend to become addicted to psychoactive drugs, since it is the health categories that most come into direct contact and have easy access to them (Vieira *et al.*, 2016). Nurses, in their daily practice, handle various types of medications and facilitated access may favor self-prescription and self-medication. Even with theoretical and practical knowledge about the use of these substances and their implications, they are often just trying to get rid of troublesome situations to cope with the workday. The reality of nursing workers, involving multiple journeys, associated to the complexity of hospital work, makes it possible to consider that they may face moments of difficulties and / or crises, making the consumption of drugs as a possibility to facilitate the conduct of their lives (Barros, 2009). In this sense, the problem of the use of psychoactive substances associated to the constant stress in the work of these professionals reveals the consumption between categories of work, as in the emergency service (ambulance), rural workers and nurses. Work overload and ease of access to drugs are related to the reasons nursing uses. In addition, the nurse is one of the professionals who is directly connected with the public affected by drug use or dependence (Félix, 2016). In this regard, Baggio (2009), reveal that professionals have knowledge about the drugs available, their effects and, as a rule, have easy access, a fact that favors self-medication. And so, they self-medicate based on their knowledge and practice, according to their needs. However, self-medication without the follow-up of another professional may become abusive or indiscriminate, and may incur the risk of suffering the undesirable and even irreversible effects caused by the drug. Following this same perspective, it should also be remembered that nursing workers deal daily with various situations that entail an exhaustive and stressful burden on the

work environment, in addition to performing their care functions, these professionals, by nature of training, are the health workers who are most in direct contact with the patient, living closely with family pressure, their anxieties, anxieties and sufferings, caused by the pathologies that affect them, until death. Given the work conditions, as a triggering factor for the use of psychoactive substances by nursing workers, nurses in their daily lives are exposed to a high workload, which can cause serious damage to the health of the worker, since they live together for years with repetitive effort ranging from low to high complexity, requiring greater performance of their skills and work overload (Vieira *et al.*, 2016). There are several aspects that contribute to the fact that nursing work is considered difficult work, and this requires a certain kind of emotional balance so that they can manage these daily situations, culminating in the consumption of psychoactive substances in the attempt to seek this balance. Martins (2007) emphasize that the use of psychoactive substances for the purpose of reducing stress, stress and other symptoms consists of a mechanism used by the worker to deny or minimizes the perception of the reality that causes him to suffer. When analyzing the possible risk factors for alcohol and other drug abuse among workers, consideration should be given to coexistence with stressors in the workplace, peer rivalry, dissatisfaction with work, and the role they play (Oliveira *et al.*, 2013).

Psychoactive Substances and consequences for the work and health of the nursing worker: Historically linked to the cultural process of mankind, SPAs had great expressiveness in the midst of society, as they were part of a routine context in celebrations, used as formulas of disinhibition and social interaction, in mystical and religious rituals. However, with their increasing presence in the social environment, the consumption of these substances gave way to indiscriminate use, commercialization, trafficking, expansion among the most varied social strata, and consequently chemical dependence, generating what today in contemporary society, is a serious public health problem worldwide. In the occupational area, the consumption of such substances by workers is a present reality with diverse personal and professional consequences, among which we can highlight the increase in absenteeism, constant delays, absence of the workplace during the working hours, a significant increase in personal accidents and personal frictions with colleagues and, generally, precarious living standards. Regarding the organization, in addition to the aforementioned consequences, there may be damage to property due to equipment malfunction and loss of material, layoff costs, medical licenses and labor turnover, jeopardizing the company's productivity and image before the employees themselves, the clientele and the community in general (Dias *et al.*, 2011; Oliveira *et al.*, 2013). The professional, in submitting to the initial use of psychoactive substances, often proceeds with other uncontrolled experiences, revealing behavioral changes. Thus, their modified profile reveals an undesirable performance: low performance, high rates of absenteeism, non-collaborative with the team, difficult coexistence and social discomfort in the work environment, besides being susceptible to errors and accidents (Dias *et al.*, 2011). Nursing is considered to be one of the most vulnerable professions to the consumption of SPAs, and when it uses its theoretical-scientific knowledge, or even the knowledge acquired in its daily practice, in health services, to self-design, gives space to abusive use and they end up becoming dependent on them, because the routine with the handling and

the accessibility favors so that these professionals can be constantly consumed in an unbridled way and without any accompaniment by other professionals, causing chemical dependence and consequently social, labor and even familiar disorders. The nursing worker adds a high number of professionals who suffer physical and psychological exhaustion due to the exhaustion faced at work. They use psychoactive substances, even without medical guidance, in order to alleviate the burden of physical and emotional work that compromises the quality of life of the professional and the activities performed (Vieira *et al.*, 2016). In the view of these professionals, the use of SPAs can be seen as an escape valve for hard routine and stress at work, a situation that can lead to social and labor life shattering, as well as the emergence of deleterious effects (cognitive and organic) (Félix, 2016). It still has devastating consequences that have repercussions in several contexts, both economic and health. This phenomenon is not limited only to the individual who consumes it, but transgresses the individual sphere, also attacking families and society in general (Branco *et al.*, 2013).

Conclusion

This article aims to reflect on the consequences that the conditions and aspects that permeate the work of nursing bring to these professionals, to rethink about how the nursing worker is within his work context and how the consumption of psychoactive substances has entered each time in the workplace and affecting their lives. The problem of psychoactive substances has permeated the social scenarios and its effects have been attractive for the main actors who are considered health promoters and advocates of the prevention of the consumption of these substances. We can see reversal of roles, in which professionals become patient and subject to consumption, addiction and dependence. This situation is caused by different factors, but it is established within the same social context, which, like others, needs to be perceived, detected and focused on intervention. The consumption of psychoactive substances has become a reality among nursing workers and deserve special attention because, in so far as this consumption is established with the aspects that permeate the work, it leads us to ponder on the extent to which the execution of the functions nursing work can be considered healthy; of how work directly influences the quality of life of these professionals and how much to the nursing is vulnerable to the consumption of psychoactive substances. Therefore, there is a need for further discussion and studies in this segment so that the true relationship that nursing work with nursing can be unveiled, such that the influence on the consumption of psychoactive substances, so that strategies of prevention, measures to promote health within the work environment and establish actions that safeguard the health and quality of life of these professionals as health workers.

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