

Teaching and learning processes of nursing students about HIV/aids management

O processo de ensino e aprendizagem de estudantes de enfermagem sobre o manejo do HIV/aids

Erika Aparecida Catoia¹, Taís Regina Mesquita², Elis Regina Mesquita³, Livia Maria Lopes⁴,
Renata Karina Reis⁵, Rosangela Andrade Aukar Camargo⁶, Tereza Cristina Scatena Villa⁷, Aline Aparecida Monroe⁸

¹ Nurse. Student at the Nursing Graduate Program, Master Level, at the Nursing School of Ribeirão Preto (EERP) from Universidade de São Paulo (USP). Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: erikacatoia@usp.br.

² Student of the Nursing Undergraduate Course at the EERP/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: tais.mesquita@usp.br.

³ Student of the Undergraduate Course in Biological Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Languages at Ribeirão Preto/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: elis.mesquita@usp.br.

⁴ Nurse, Master in Health Sciences. Student at the Nursing in Public Health Graduate Program, Doctoral level, at EERP/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: lilopes@usp.br.

⁵ Nurse, Ph.D in Fundamental Nursing. Professor at the EERP/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: rkreis@eerp.usp.br.

⁶ Nurse and Pedagogue. Ph.D in Psychiatric Nursing. Professor at the EERP/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: rcamargo@eerp.usp.br.

⁷ Nurse, Ph.D in Nursing. Full Professor at the EERP/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: tite@eerp.usp.br.

⁸ Nurse, Ph.D in Nursing. Professor at the EERP/USP. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. E-mail: amonroe@eerp.usp.br.

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to analyze teaching-learning processes related to HIV/aids through students of the last year of the nursing undergraduate course in a superior public educational institution. A descriptive quantitative study that used a self-reported instrument with sociodemographic variables, questions about teaching opportunities related to the theme and deepening of the content addressed. Descriptive techniques were used for data analysis. Eighty-four students participated in the study, from those 51,2% did not have theoretic classes about the theme, however, 57,1% affirmed to have contact with the subject in practice. In general, teaching presented fragilities. When facing challenges and advances in the complex universe of the condition, it is primordial to rethink educational processes in nursing training, as this professional is responsible for care management of people living with HIV/aids. Results provided elements for reflection of the nursing teaching reality about the disease.

Descriptors: HIV; Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome; Education, Nursing; Students, Nursing.

RESUMO

O estudo objetivou analisar os processos de ensino e aprendizagem relacionados ao HIV/aids pelos alunos do último ano dos cursos de enfermagem de uma instituição pública de ensino superior. Estudo descritivo de abordagem quantitativa, que utilizou um instrumento autoaplicável contendo variáveis sociodemográficas; questões sobre oportunidades de ensino sobre o tema e aprofundamento dos conteúdos abordados. Para a análise dos dados utilizou-se técnicas descritivas. Participaram do estudo, 84 alunos, dos quais 51,2% não tiveram aulas teóricas sobre o tema, entretanto, 57,1% afirmaram contato com o assunto em situações na prática. De modo geral o ensino apresentou fragilidades. Frente aos desafios e avanços no complexo universo do agravo é primordial repensar os processos educacionais na formação do enfermeiro, posto que este profissional responsabiliza-se pela gestão do cuidado às pessoas que vivem com HIV/aids. Os resultados encontrados fornecem elementos para reflexão sobre a realidade do ensino em enfermagem sobre o agravo.

Descritores: HIV; Síndrome da Imunodeficiência Adquirida; Educação em Enfermagem; Estudantes de Enfermagem.

INTRODUCTION

HIV/aids infection still has a large impact in the life of 35 million people living with the virus in the whole world. The epidemic is actually concentrated in developed countries and especially reaches marginalized and stigmatized groups who are more vulnerable to the condition⁽¹⁾. Brazil annually notifies 38.000 new cases of the disease⁽²⁾.

Thus, facing HIV/aids still is a major challenge for health services that need, within others, capable and qualified health professionals in all attention points to health develop the adequate prevention and disease management addressing biological and psychological aspects of individuals. It should consider insertions in different sociocultural and economical contexts and, therefore, professional training is needed so that professionals become apt to act in a complex scenario where the disease is present⁽³⁻⁴⁾.

The need to train professionals apt to execute HIV/aids prevention, diagnostic and treatment is the most relevant subject at the measure that the Health Ministry (HM) advances in discussions and operationalization of the process to decentralize care for people living with HIV/aids to primary attention. This will occur through shared management between the primary and secondary networks (the Specialized Assistance Service –SAE). Through shared management of care, it will be possible to broaden the early diagnosis and start the treatment in an opportune time, reflecting decrease in deaths related to aids and guaranteeing quality of life improvements⁽⁵⁾.

Therefore, it is essential for health institutions to improve their training for health professionals for the adequate HIV/aids management, besides being attentive to the specialties of vulnerable social groups in which scientific research have been revealing a higher growth and epidemic impact⁽⁶⁾. In this perspective, the nurse' role is highlighted as a health team member and important actor constituting an integral and shared care among other professionals. The emphasis is on the control of the

condition and in the integral care for people living with HIV/aids (PLWHA).

However, national studies identified deficiencies in knowledge of nursing students about diverse aspects involved in HIV/aids, topics related to prevention and transmission were the ones most known among the students. But more complex aspects of adequate management of the condition, among them, HIV/aids interfaces as drugs, related to women's health and the therapeutic, were deficient⁽⁷⁻¹¹⁾.

Beyond that, students' perceptions regarding its vulnerability to HIV/aids was worrying, considering that they do not recognize themselves vulnerable to HIV/aids and consider it a "disease of others"^(7,10). In these studies we identified knowledge gaps related to teaching-learning opportunities, disciplines inserted on the nursing curriculum involving the HIV/aids theme, as well as identification of the student's perception about the training process for adequate HIV/aids management.

International studies involving knowledge assessment, attitudes and beliefs of nursing students regarding HIV/aids⁽¹²⁻¹³⁾, identified students having limited knowledge about the management of the condition, and presented negative attitudes and fear of HIV/aids contamination during professional practice. Authors highlight stigmas and prejudices, which can bring negative impacts in the quality of assistance to PLWHA, as well as it can influence the wish of nursing students to work with PLWHA after graduation⁽¹²⁻¹³⁾.

The strategies that prioritize contact opportunities between nursing students and PLWHA are associated with more positive attitudes, increasing the interest and the quality of care provided to PLWHA⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁶⁾.

In general, analyzed studies points to existing gaps in scientific knowledge production in relation to the knowledge of nursing students, reiterating in this sense, the importance of the present study, that will allow identification of challenges related to health education.

It is important to note the preoccupation with professional training in the Unified Health System (SUS)

context, requiring from the Health and Education Ministries, the development of articulated and integrated strategies aiming to improve the training process of such professionals, in a way that they are apt to act considering the diverse social and sanitary realities in the country.

In this aspect and considering the preoccupation with the training and human resources capacity in the health field, is also inserted in a national context for the SUS strengthening and implementation, our study aimed to analyze the teaching and learning processes related to HIV/aids by the nursing students at the last undergraduate year of a public institution of superior education. Such study is relevant in describing the reality of nursing courses, to help the reflection of curricular contents preconized in the training of a critical-reflective nurse, apt to act in diverse dimensions involving the complex PLWHA care in all points of health attention, with the content offered in activities and teaching-learning emersions.

METHODS

A descriptive exploratory study, with quantitative approach conducted in a superior public educational institution in the interior of São Paulo state, Brazil. The unit chosen for the study was a nursing school composed by approximately 590 undergraduate and 490 graduate students. This institution is a center that collaborates with nursing research development and it is recognized as an excellence center in Brazil and internationally.

The study population was composed by bachelor and bachelor/license nursing students who were on their last year of course, meeting the inclusion criteria: for students of the bachelor course, to be regularly enrolled on the fourth year – preferentially on the 8th period – and for students of the bachelor/license course, to be regularly enrolled in the fifth year of course – preferentially on the 10th period.

Sixty-nine students were regularly enrolled on the 8th period of the bachelor course in 2012. Forty-three students were enrolled in the respective period in 2012.

Among reasons for losses during data collection, we highlight: students who locked their enrollment, students in exchange programs, those who were away from the classroom during data collection and, still, those who denied participation in the study.

Data collection was conducted during the months of November and December 2012. We used a structured self-reported questionnaire elaborated through progressive steps of discussion and consensus between experts on HIV/aids, pedagogy and health education, in addition, discussion with the research team, having as theoretical fundamentals the material “Recommendations from the Health Ministry to ARVT in adults infected by HIV”⁽⁶⁾.

The study had sociodemographic variables, variables related to teaching-learning opportunities during the undergraduate course, related to the HIV/aids theme; pertinence and learning content adequacy of topics addressed during teaching-learning processes.

Researchers approached students in the classroom during their activities. At first, professors responsible for those academic activities were previously consulted for the use of approximately 10 minutes of their class, so that researchers could explain the study, its objectives and deliver the data collection instrument and the Free and Informed Consent to students who accepted to participate in the study. After the professors’ consent, we invited the students to participate in the study.

Data was collected, stored and analyzed through a statistic program. The statistical techniques used were: frequency, mean, median and standard deviation.

The study was approved by the Ethics in Research Committee from the institution where the study was conducted (Protocol no. 07765312.0.0000.5393).

RESULTS

Eighty-four nursing students participated in the study. Most participants were female (88,0%), the mean age was 24 years (SD = 2,96). Regarding their previous professional experience, 72 (85,7%) students did not

work before entering the course. Regarding the course modality, 60 (71,4%) were from the bachelor and 24 (28,6%) were from the bachelor/license. About starting

year, most enrolled in 2009, that is 51 (60,7%) participants (Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the sociodemographic and admission characteristics of a superior public educational institution at São Paulo state, Brazil, 2012.

| Sociodemographic Characteristics | | Students (N=84) | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------|
| | | N | % |
| Gender | Female | 74 | 88,0 |
| | Male | 10 | 12,0 |
| | None | 72 | 85,7 |
| Previous work experience | Nursing assistant | 2 | 2,4 |
| | Nursing technician | 3 | 3,6 |
| | Others | 5 | 5,9 |
| | Did not answer | 2 | 2,4 |
| Admission characteristics | | Students (N=84) | |
| | | N | % |
| Course modality | Bachelor | 60 | 71,4 |
| | Bachelor and License | 24 | 28,6 |
| | Did not answer | 0 | 0 |
| Course | Year of admission | Students (N=84) | |
| | | N | % |
| Bachelor | 2009 | 51 | 60,7 |
| | 2008 | 4 | 4,8 |
| | 2007 | 2 | 2,4 |
| | Did not answer | 3 | 3,5 |
| Bachelor and License | 2008 | 21 | 25,0 |
| | 2007 | 2 | 2,4 |
| | Did not answer | 1 | 1,2 |

Regarding the variable - teaching related to HIV/aids offered by the institution – approximately 50% of participants denied the discipline available at the curriculum and 94% affirmed absence of the optional

discipline addressing the theme. From students who affirmed contact with the theme during the course, they pointed the immunology discipline as the main collaborator to learn about HIV/aids (HIV/aids) (Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency distribution of teaching-learning opportunities related to HIV/aids during the course, in a superior public educational institution in São Paulo state, Brazil, 2012.

| Teaching-learning process | | Students (N=84) | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|------|
| | | n | % |
| Mandatory theoretical disciplines | No | 43 | 51,2 |
| | Yes | 40 | 47,6 |
| | Did not answer | 1 | 1,2 |
| Elective disciplines | No | 79 | 94,0 |
| | Yes | 5 | 6,0 |
| | No | 35 | 41,7 |
| Immersion in the practical field | Yes | 48 | 57,1 |
| | Did not answer | 1 | 1,2 |
| | No | 26 | 30,9 |
| Scientific events (lectures, symposiums and conferences). | Yes | 57 | 67,9 |
| | Did not answer | 1 | 1,2 |
| | No | 68 | 81,0 |
| Extra-curricular internship | No | 68 | 81,0 |
| | Yes | 16 | 19,0 |

It is still important to note that for 48 (57,1%) participants who reported experience with HIV/aids in the practice scenario highlighting the integralities disciplines, supervised internships, integral care to adult

and elderly hospitalized in clinical situations. It was noted that, 68 (81,0%) of students denied to do extra-curriculum internships involving HIV/aids. Regarding scientific events, 57 (67,9%) students participated in

lectures, symposiums and conferences about STD/aids (Table 2). Only 2,4% referred to projects of scientific initiation involving aspects of the condition.

In relation to the variable – student's satisfaction about the theoretical HIV/aids content - most part assessed as regular the following themes: microbiology and immune-pathogenicity (52,4%); signals and

symptoms (41,7%); opportunist infections and their clinical management (52,4%); drug treatment/side effects and incentives to adherence (46,4%); epidemiological vigilance (41,7%). Only the transmission and prevention content was considered sufficient by most students (65,5%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Frequency distribution of HIV/aids learning content addressed in a superior public educational institution in São Paulo state, Brazil, 2012.

| Teaching-learning process | Students (N=84) | |
|--|------------------|---------|
| | N | % |
| Microbiology and immuno-pathogenicity | Sufficient | 14 16,7 |
| | Regular | 44 52,4 |
| | Insufficient | 24 28,5 |
| | Not addressed | 2 2,4 |
| Transmission and prevention | Sufficient | 55 65,5 |
| | Regular | 24 28,5 |
| | Insufficient | 4 4,8 |
| | Not addressed | 1 1,2 |
| Signals and symptoms | Sufficient | 34 40,4 |
| | Regular | 35 41,7 |
| | Insufficient | 14 16,7 |
| | Not addressed | 1 1,2 |
| Opportunist infections and its clinical management | Sufficient | 17 20,2 |
| | Regular | 44 52,4 |
| | Insufficient | 21 25,0 |
| | Not addressed | 1 1,2 |
| Drug treatment/ side effects and incentive to adherence | Did not answered | 1 1,2 |
| | Sufficient | 7 8,3 |
| | Regular | 39 46,4 |
| | Insufficient | 36 42,9 |
| Epidemiological vigilance | Not addressed | 2 2,4 |
| | Sufficient | 10 11,9 |
| | Regular | 35 41,7 |
| | Insufficient | 32 38,1 |
| Basic Attention competency for HIV/aids control | Not addressed | 7 8,3 |
| | Sufficient | 14 16,7 |
| | Regular | 44 52,4 |
| | Insufficient | 22 26,2 |
| STD/aids competency in reference ambulatories for HIV/aids accompaniment and treatment | Not addressed | 4 4,7 |
| | Sufficient | 7 8,3 |
| | Regular | 38 45,2 |
| | Insufficient | 32 38,2 |
| Clinical management in the hospital context | Not addressed | 7 8,3 |
| | Sufficient | 13 15,5 |
| | Regular | 37 44,0 |
| | Insufficient | 26 30,9 |
| STD/aids attention networks | Not addressed | 8 9,5 |
| | Sufficient | 5 6,0 |
| | Regular | 41 48,8 |
| | Insufficient | 30 35,7 |
| Biosafety and protocols for work related accidents | Not addressed | 8 9,5 |
| | Sufficient | 31 36,9 |
| | Regular | 35 41,7 |
| | Insufficient | 16 19,0 |
| | Not addressed | 2 2,4 |

Regarding the variable – proximity with the theme during practice scenarios – most part of interviewed assessed as regular: Basic attention competencies for identification of vulnerable groups in the community, with emphasis in prevention and clinical accompaniment of suspected/confirmed cases and respective communicants, (52,4%); The reference ambulatory' competencies for the clinical accompaniment and treatment of suspected/communicant STD/aids and Viral Hepatitis cases (45,2%); clinical management in the hospital context (44,0%) (Table 3).

Education about the organization of the attention network for STD/aids in the city where the study was conducted - (48,8%) and, the biosafety and protocols for occupational accidents (41,7%), were equally considered regular by great part of students; most of them also assessed as regular the content taught/worked (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

Most participants denied systematic teaching-learning opportunities about HIV/aids during academic training. Having knowledge about HIV/aids for nursing students have been considered of fundamental importance to train professionals apt to manage the disease⁽⁸⁾, thus, it is indispensable to rethink teaching-learning strategies to PLWHA⁽⁹⁻¹⁰⁾.

For this reason, it is essential to provide learning dynamics for integral care creating a nursing professional turned to the individual centered health model and based on health promotion, knowing about light technologies and creation of the bond between professional-user⁽¹⁷⁾, family and community.

Regarding the educational content, only - ways of transmission and prevention – was considered sufficient. This result converges with results of other studies^(8,10). This fact can be explained as it is the less complex content, allowing integration with the student's previous knowledge, through access to prevention campaigns on the media or access to internet, which could have

contributed for the teaching-learning process about ways of transmission and prevention⁽⁸⁾.

A study conducted with health professionals corroborate with data from this research, demonstrating possible gaps in the teaching-learning process resulting on deficiencies in the training process in relation to themes involving care management and adequate HIV/aids management⁽⁴⁾. This finding denotes the need to deepen the theoretical curriculum content addressing this theme, focusing on different aspects involving the infection complex universe and living with HIV/aids.

Students reported regular knowledge about basic attention competency for HIV/aids control. This result is worrying, once the Health Ministry makes efforts to strengthen HIV/aids prevention decentralization, diagnosis and treatment. It should be noted that in 2012, when the data collection was conducted, it was understood that basic attention competency was turned to implementation of STD/HIV prevention activities in the basic health network, being this, a priority Brazilian policy for the control of these diseases⁽¹⁸⁾, and still, knowledge was considered regular. Thus, it is fundamental for undergraduate courses to address the basic attention role in disease control in a broad way and consider the barriers to develop efficacious strategies for prevention and opportune diagnosis, HIV clinical management, and the integral care of people living with HIV/aids. Therefore, creating professionals able to deal with the problem and capable to assume care management. This change in needed and challenging and, require strategical actions considering incorporation of health promotion, as reference in the education and health practices^(5,17).

The contact with HIV/aids in the field practice immersion was reported by most participants. Studies identified that nursing students valued the internships, becoming a differential in their professional training⁽¹⁹⁾, allowing immersions in the social reality of health services and approximation between users and health services since the first year of their undergraduate course⁽²⁰⁾. The supervised internship insert students in health services

and in distinct social contexts, allowing the student to acquire integral care skills, for health education and management⁽²¹⁾. It allows the development of abilities needed for a quality professional practice and with autonomy when articulating the knowledge from theory with the practice, being the professor, a facilitator for the critical-reflexive thinking process, needed by the students for their professional training⁽²²⁾.

Besides, immersion experiences in the practical field give nursing students the opportunity to get closer to different cultures and regions with health disparities in addition to the acquisition of knowledge, contributing for the development of attitudes and beliefs that value the individual, especially the marginalized and vulnerable ones⁽²³⁾. Thus, the practical field consists of a privileged space to develop professional attitudes, skills and competencies for the adequate HIV/aids management in diverse health services. Yet, only a part of the students in our study felt contemplated with an internship field that allowed contact with the assistance for people living with HIV/aids, allowing them to acquire and/or deepen knowledge about the condition management.

In this sense, the teaching and learning process given through social interactions is also its arrival point, experienced by students in the learning environment, following the against-hegemonic pedagogic conception, known in Brazil as socio-historic. Reflections of these experiences propitiate conditions and the dynamic to internalize the knowledge, sometimes mediated by the professor. The educational maturation process comprehends the professor' perception of a potential area for the student' cognitive development and his capacity to resolve problems individually, but sometimes depends on the mediation of the professor⁽²⁴⁾.

The study points out reduced opportunities in social interactions in learning environments favoring the appropriation of complexity of concepts for the assistance to people living with HIV/aids. Lack of opportunities can result in partial or general knowledge appropriation weakening the social practice result. When

understanding this pedagogic chain, it is observed that cognitive abstractions in this study can be partial or inexistent and result in wrong actions, or only mechanical with no true conceptual links. It implicates in a deep reflection of the education act that involves analysis of the relationship between conscience and the social being and the unit between theory and practice⁽²⁵⁾, allowing an adequate management of a complex disease, influenced by biological, psychological and social aspects, as it is the HIV/aids infection.

As methodological limitations of the study, we recognize that our assessment of the learning and teaching processes about HIV/aids management considered the knowledge from a small sample of nursing students of only one university, although such university is considered a national and international reference in nursing training. In addition, beliefs, values and personal experiences of students might have influenced the answers.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, nursing students pointed fragilities in theoretical content addressed during the teaching-learning process, showing the need to deepen the curriculum contents involving the theme in diverse aspects permeating the complex universe of the disease. To face the challenges and advances of this universe is primordial to rethink educational processes in nursing training with curriculum improvement, incorporating innovative and problematizing learning processes and, opportunities for immersions in the practice field for health promotion and assistance to people living with HIV/aids.

Thus, the approach to HIV/aids in basic health attention should be highlighted, during the training process. Once this disease have national epidemiological relevance, and also reflects a panorama with a trajectory of achievements and advances for disease prevention and control, unveiling engagement and militancy of health professionals, overall from nursing, and points to

significant changes to decentralize actions and health services for the Basic Attention.

Our findings signal the need to broaden practice opportunities during the training process for nursing students. The vision and knowledge of students should be broad to recognize the role and potentialities of nursing actions aimed to healthcare integrality in diverse scenarios of their professional practice, considering health attention as a whole.

Our results provide elements to help with the reflection about the reality of nursing education in a superior educational institution about HIV/aids and, they

identified needs to enhance teaching strategies about the diverse dimensions involving the management of HIV/aids.

The development of other studies about this theme should be encouraged involving courses of other universities, in special, allowing a broad view for regional characteristics of nursing academic training, for professionals to act in the integral care to PLWHA. Studies of this nature can map obtained advances and innovative ideas in this process, as well as challenges from HIV/aids epidemiology.

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