

# NURSING ASSISTANCE IN CHILDCARE CONSULTATION FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

ASSISTÊNCIA DE ENFERMAGEM NA CONSULTA DE PUERICULTURA PARA AVALIAÇÃO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO INFANTIL

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#### **ABSTRACT**

During childcare, conducting consultations for childcare plays a crucial role in identifying potential neurode-velopmental delays in infants. Objective: To explore the relevance of nursing support in assessing child development for neurological deficits during childcare consultations in literature published between 2018 and 2023. Methods: A narrative review was conducted using the databases "Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde" and "Scientific Electronic Library Online." The keywords used were: "childcare advice," "care," and "infantile development"; the Boolean operators "or" and "and" were also utilized. Results: A total of 70 articles were found in the Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde and 44 in the Scientific Electronic Library Online. However, only 5 articles from the Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde and 2 from the Scientific Electronic Library Online met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in a selection of 7 articles for the study. This narrative review reveals vulnerabilities in the approach to childcare and infant development, including the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the child and various barriers that impact the quality of childcare advice. Conclusions: The findings emphasize the significance of ongoing childcare consultations involving health professionals and caregivers to adequately address the child's needs and ensure healthy growth and development.

**Keywords:** childhood; nursing; quality of life.

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### **RESUMO**

A execução das consultas de puericultura no acompanhamento infantil desempenha um papel crucial na detecção precoce de possíveis atrasos no neurodesenvolvimento durante as consultas de enfermagem. Objetivo: Explorar na literatura, publicações de artigos sobre a assistência de Enfermagem na consulta de puericultura para avaliação do Desenvolvimento Infantil, e a sua relevância na identificação de um possível atraso no neurodesenvolvimento no período de 2018 a 2023. Métodos: Foi realizado um estudo de tipo revisão narrativa, utilizando as bases de dados da Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde, e da Scientific Electronic Library Online. Os descritores utilizados foram: "Consulta de puericultura", "Enfermagem" e "Desenvolvimento infantil", empregando-se como operadores booleano "or" e "and". Resultados: Foram encontrados um total de 70 artigos na Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde e 44 artigos Scientific Electronic Library Online. No entanto, apenas cinco da Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde e dois da Scientific Electronic Library atenderam aos critérios de inclusão, resultando em um total de sete artigos selecionados para estudo. A partir desta revisão narrativa, observou-se a presença de fragilidades na abordagem do acompanhamento e desenvolvimento infantil, incluindo a falta de avaliação completa da criança, e diversos obstáculos que afetam a qualidade das consultas de puericultura. Conclusão: Os resultados ressaltam a importância de uma consulta de puericultura contínua, que envolva o suporte tanto dos profissionais de saúde quanto dos cuidadores, a fim de atender plenamente às necessidades das crianças e garantir um crescimento e desenvolvimento saudável.

Palavras-chave: enfermagem; infância; qualidade de vida.

# INTRODUCTION

Child development (CD) is a complex, active process that results from the interaction between genetic inheritance, biological aspects, and environmental influences. It encompasses the acquisition of abilities in various domains (motor, cognitive, psychosocial, and linguistic) to perform daily activities and social roles (SANTOS *et al.*, 2021). The simpler skills that constitute neuropsychomotor development form the foundation for the more complex ones, and it is crucial to have a clear understanding and ability to differentiate between these skills. Therefore, as primitive reflexes are inhibited, the child acquires new skills and reaches developmental milestones. While every child grows at their own rate, it is expected that their growth will align with observed age patterns (BORGES *et al.*, 2020).

Infancy is a critical phase of life that involves significant growth and human development. These processes are influenced by environmental, biological, familial, and social factors, which can have long-term implications for adult life. Therefore, healthcare professionals must pay close attention to this phase in order to detect any early developmental changes that may impact adult productivity and independence (PEREIRA NETO *et al.*, 2020).

According to Martins (2020, p. 16), interventions encompassing the period before conception and the first two years of life can significantly reduce the adverse effects on growth and health, helping children reach their full developmental potential. The healthcare work process, particularly during patient care, should prioritize using user-friendly technology, fostering relationships, and building bonds. This approach promotes autonomy in the interactions between the user and the healthcare



professional. The Family Health Strategy offers child health services aimed at monitoring growth and development and preventing illnesses using light technologies that facilitate comprehensive care within the child's biopsychosocial context (VIEIRA et al., 2019).

Childcare is a prioritized area in the population' health due to the vulnerability of this 'life stage. Providing comprehensive care that fulfills all essential developmental needs is crucial, and nurses play a key role in this through nursing consultations (GAÍVA et al., 2018). Nursing consultations for children are an indispensable tool, enabling vigilance over CD and the implementation of prevention and health promotion strategies. Through this vigilance, nurses can provide qualified, systematic, comprehensive, and individualized care, thereby preventing disorders that may impact normal development (VIEIRA et al., 2019).

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to emphasize the importance of childcare consultations in CD and their relevance in identifying possible neurological delays through systematic evaluation and monitoring. The aim, based on literature and articles published between 2018 and 2023, is to explore the role of nursing support in childcare consultations for CD evaluation.

# **METHODS**

This is a literature review that focuses on analyzing and discussing the current state of a specific subject from a contextual or theoretical perspective. The studies examined primarily include literature reviews found in books, print publications, or electronic journals. The authors of these articles provide their own interpretations and critical analysis. This category of articles is valuable in terms of providing ongoing education, as it allows readers to quickly acquire and update their knowledge on a specific topic (SALLUM; GARCIA; SANCHES, 2012).

The data collection was conducted between May and June 2023, using the databases Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde (BVS) and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO). The descriptors used were "child consultation" and "care," combined with the Boolean operators "OR" and "AND." The inclusion criteria were defined for national articles with full texts available online in Portuguese, published between 2018 and 2023. Studies in other languages and those published prior to 2018 were excluded. The purpose of the literature review is to examine the latest research on nursing care during childcare consultations to evaluate child development. The review will focus on studies conducted between 2018 and 2023, aiming to present an up-to-date perspective on practices and findings in this area. The review seeks to identify trends and gaps and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and practices in this field.

Once the studies were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the methodological process proceeded as follows: assessment of the included studies, critical analysis of the data, discussion, interpretation of the results, and presentation of the synthesized knowledge. During the

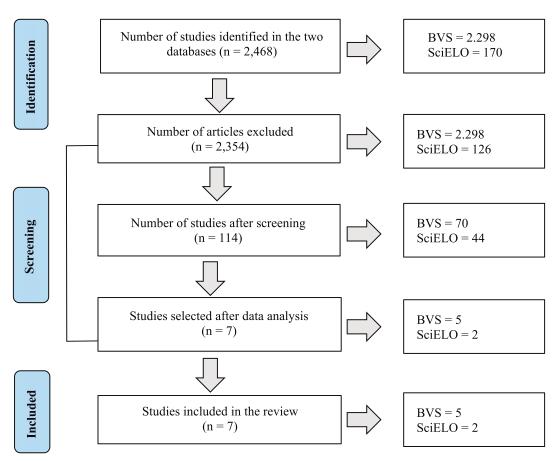


analysis of the publications, the following elements were considered: authors, year of publication, objective, method, and results, which were individually analyzed.

## **RESULTS**

According to the search, 2,298 articles were found in BVS, with an additional 170 in SciELO. After applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria, the number of articles was reduced to 70 from BVS and 44 from SciELO. Following a critical analysis of the data, a total of 7 articles were selected for further consideration, 5 from BVS and 2 from SciELO (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Articles identified from the BVS and SciELO databases based on the predetermined criteria.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The 7 articles selected for this study are related to the themes of this paper, which are quality of life, growth, and child development in healthcare units. Additionally, they examine the nurses' work process and activities that contribute to the delayed perception of CD during childcare consultations, as shown in Table 1.



**Table 1 -** Articles identified in the BVS and SciELO databases by author, year of publication, objective, delimitation, method, and results. Guarapuava-PR, Brazil, 2023.

Authors and year of publication	Objectives	Design and methods	Results
Gaíva et al. (2018)	Analyzing the child's growth and development assessment in the nurse's office.	A descriptive study and qualitative analysis were conducted with nurses who provided pediatric consultations. Data collection was done by observing 21 nursing consultations from January to February/2012.	Two categories were identified: child growth assessment during the nursing visit and child development during the nursing visit.
Vieira et al. (2019)	Investigating the nursing work process during child care consultation to monitor child development in family health units.	Descriptive and qualitative studies were conducted with 19 nurses who participated in childcare consultations for children under 2 years of age in Family Health Units.	The nurses implemented some child- care activities, but the infrastructure was precarious, supplies were scarce, and maternal attendance at consulta- tions was low.
Pereira Neto et al. (2020)	Analyzing how the follow- -up of child development is implemented in the child care process by Family Health Strategy nurses.	An exploratory and descriptive study with qualitative analysis was conducted with 11 nurses of the Family Health Strategy. Data was collected from November to December/2018 using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis.	The tools and records used for child care monitoring were studied, and important aspects of child assessment and promotion of child care development were also investigated.
Borges <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Evaluating the quality of life and development of children stratified as high risk.	A quantitative, descriptive, exploratory, and cross-sectional study in the Child Maternal Care Center with 101 children. The questionnaires were analyzed using Epi Info software.	A positive association was observed between neuropsychomotor delay and the caregiver's educational level, family income, age group, interven- tion time at birth, and feeding.
Santos et al. (2021)	Understanding nurses' perception and practice of identifying signs of risk/ delayed development in children monitored during childcare nursing consul- tations.	A qualitative study was conducted with 12 nurses working in the family health units of a health district in Recife between January and March 2017.	Most of the nurses were familiar with and used the child development monitoring form proposed by the Ministry of Health during childcare consultations. However, the language used to define signs of risk and delay was not precise.
Brito et al. (2021)	Analyzing the knowledge of caregivers and the factors associated with neuropsychomotor development in children.	A cross-sectional study with a quantitative approach was carried out with child caregivers attending public health services in Parnaíba. The "Denver II Test" and the "Child Development Knowledge Inventory" were used.	197 children were classified as having normal development and 23 as having suspicious development.
Gondim et al. (2022)	Analyzing maternal know- ledge about child develop- ment and its corresponden- ce to the care offered to the child in the first year of life.	Longitudinal, prospective study of 121 women in a Brazilian municipality during pregnancy and the 12th/13th month of the child. Calculation of hit rates, regression by ordinary least squares method, and White's standard error were used.	Socio-economic factors, health, safety, and child development milestones were more likely to be correct. Primiparous mothers were more likely to wean, be gifted, and have contact with technology, and they were less likely to seek information on childcare.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).



# **DISCUSSION**

Each child experiences and develops in a unique way, influenced by their environment, genetic factors, and environmental and socioeconomic stimuli. According to Santos *et al.* (2021), the most intense transformations occur during the first infancy, which covers the ages between 0 and 6 years, and these transformations affect social, psychological, and physical development. These changes make children vulnerable to health risks and require monitoring by health professionals. Child health care involves the regular and systematic monitoring of children in childcare. This is crucial because human beings are particularly vulnerable during this stage of life. By monitoring children's health, childcare providers aim to decrease the occurrence of diseases and enhance their growth and development, enabling them to reach their maximum potential (CAMPOS *et al.*, 2011).

Childcare consultation is a valuable tool for monitoring child development, as it is a simple and dynamic process that allows for improved surveillance of growth and development (VIERIA *et al.*, 2018). In Brazil, this monitoring is carried out by the primary care attention system in a longitudinal manner, with a focus on the first 2 years of a child's life. Primary care coordinates healthcare networks and includes monitoring child development and care and implementing strategic measures to reduce child morbidity and mortality (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2024). The Ministry of Health also established a three-level comprehensive care system to monitor children's growth and development. This system emphasizes preventive measures that promote the autonomy and co-responsibility of users, as well as early detection of any issues that may arise (SOUZA *et al.*, 2013).

Child health care is a critical aspect of healthcare, prioritizing meeting the essential needs for a child's development (GAÍVA *et al.*, 2018). Nurses play a crucial role in providing this care through nursing consultations, as supported by Law No. 7,498/86 and Decree 94,406/87. They monitor child development and growth and possess extensive knowledge of the various factors and diseases that can influence them (SILVA; SILVA; FIGUEIREDO, 2017). Monitoring growth and development is currently the primary focus of comprehensive child healthcare, as proposed by Brazilian public health policies (GAÍVA *et al.*, 2018).

According to Souza *et al.* (2013), nurses play a vital role in promoting child and family care by identifying and treating health problems and recommending appropriate care. This approach aims to reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities that may harm health. However, it is crucial to consider the importance of health vigilance through nurse consultations to promote a child's growth and development. Nurse consultations involve guidance, home visits, educational activities, identification of health situations, consideration of living conditions, and assessment of biopsychosocial characteristics (SOUZA *et al.*, 2013).

The process of nurse consultation includes a sequence of actions. It starts with gathering the nurse's history and conducting a physical examination. From there, the nurse establishes a diagnosis, formulates a prescription or therapeutic plan, and evaluates the consultation (GAÍVA *et al.*, 2018).



During a consultation, an anamnesis is taken, a general physical examination is conducted, and growth indicators such as weight, length/height, head circumference, and body mass index are assessed. Evaluation of neuropsychomotor development, including primitive reflexes and developmental milestones, is also important. Complaints and clinical findings should be considered, and information on warning signs, child development stimulation, accident prevention, and toxic stress prevention should be provided. The vaccination schedule should be updated, and all information should be recorded in the medical record and the child's handbook; these recommendations have also been listed by Vieira et al. (2023).

During a medical consultation for children, a comprehensive evaluation of 'physical and nutritional growth as well as motor, social, and emotional development is essential, according to Silva, Silva, and Figueiredo (2017). After the assessment, the health caregiver should provide guidance on immunization and personal, home, environmental, and mental hygiene. It is also important to offer guidance on safety and protection against accidents, as well as identifying injuries and risk situations.

The information obtained during the pediatric consultation must be recorded in the medical record and the child's health booklet (CHB), which is the main tool for registering and monitoring growth. The CHB includes standard deviation graphs for weight, height, and body mass index in relation to age, as well as the CD vigilance scale for monitoring development. Additionally, the CHB allows for a complete registration of the child's health history, including clinical interventions, immunization control, and iron and vitamin A supplementation since birth. These practices align with the principles defined by the National Policy of Integral Attention to Child's Health, making the CHB an important tool for both mothers and the multi-professional team involved in infant healthcare (SANTOS et al., 2021).

This policy aims to provide comprehensive and integrated care to children, promoting their full development (VIEIRA et al., 2018). The policy includes objectives and actions that aim to promote growth, development, and quality of life for children, ultimately reducing child morbidity and mortality. This is achieved through periodic and continuous care and monitoring of the child's growth and development (SILVA et al., 2020). To ensure proper care for children, the Ministry of Health has established five basic actions that should be prioritized in nursing consultations. These actions include promoting and encouraging exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age, prevention and control of gastrointestinal pathologies, acute respiratory infections, immunization, and monitoring growth and development. The Ministry of Health recommends at least seven visits during the first year of life, two visits in the second year of life, and annual visits thereafter, around the child's birthday (SILVA; SILVA; FIGUEIREDO, 2017; SILVA et al., 2020). To achieve these objectives, the Ministry of Health has proposed a minimum schedule of consultations for children, including one consultation until the 15th day of life, followed by consultations at one month, two months, four months, six months, nine months, and 12 months of age, totaling seven consultations (SILVA et al., 2020).



However, Vieira et al. (2019) argue that there are vulnerabilities in growth and CD monitoring due to fragmented care and a lack of comprehensive child assessment, resulting in reduced interactions with families during childcare consultations. The same study identified numerous barriers to the implementation of quality childcare guidance. These obstacles include limited resources, inadequate physical facilities, professional inadequacy, demotivation and lack of professional commitment, curative approaches, lack of ongoing training, undervaluing counseling, and user ignorance (VIEIRA et al., 2019). This statement is supported by a study by Silva et al. (2020), which emphasizes the importance of restructuring nursing practices. The authors suggest that nursing professionals should prioritize building trusting relationships with clients and invest in continuing education to improve the quality of care in childcare consultations.

Considering that growth and CD monitoring play a fundamental role in preventing morbidity, the identified weaknesses in service practices are concerning and require discussions to identify strategies for improvement (VIEIRA et al., 2019). Even though pediatric counseling plays a role in growth and CD monitoring, investigative research focused on nurses from the Family Health Unit of a city in the Northeast region showed that only a few professionals assess growth and neuropsychomotor development during counseling. Gaíva et al. (2018) also emphasized that growth and development are fundamental aspects of basic interventions in childcare, and nursing consultation plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating a child's health status.

Childcare plays a crucial role in creating a strong bond between the family, the child, and the healthcare team. It allows for comprehensive care and early detection of various changes in growth, nutrition, and neuropsychomotor development, thereby facilitating surveillance and promotion of the child's quality of life. A study by ZANARDO et al. (2017) highlights the importance of childcare in promoting the well-being of the child. Additionally, the results may provide insights into evaluating nursing consultation practices in childcare and improving their quality.

Lastly, SANTOS et al. (2021) also state that few nurses assess neuropsychomotor development during childcare consultations, despite many children who frequently attend primary care attention experiencing developmental delay. Therefore, investing in nurses' active role in CD vigilance and capacity building is considered a priority. This includes organizing the necessary competencies to provide extended care in childcare. Considering that monitoring the child's growth and development is essential in preventing morbidity, the fragilities found in the services' practices are concerning and need to be discussed to develop strategies to solve this problem (VIEIRA et al., 2019).

Nurses should pay close attention to the child's needs and be aware of the social context in which they live (SILVA; SILVA; FIGUEIREDO, 2017). They should assess and provide medications that can safeguard and promote the child's overall well-being, recovery, and rehabilitation. It is worth noting that the nurse's responsibility plays an essential role in ensuring comprehensive care for the child's health (SILVA et al., 2020).

# **CONCLUSION**

From this narrative review, it is evident that there are weaknesses in the support for child development due to the incomplete assessment of children. These weaknesses stem from the lack of commitment in the interaction between healthcare professionals and families and various obstacles that hinder the quality of child care. These barriers include inadequate resources, professionals, infrastructure, and a lack of awareness about the importance of childcare.

The findings underscore the significance of uninterrupted and continuous childcare counseling, supported by both families and professionals, to meet the child's needs and ensure healthy growth and development. Furthermore, it is crucial to explore strategies that can enhance the performance of healthcare professionals in monitoring child development. This is essential to promote understanding of child care and strengthen the bond between families and caregivers, enabling more effective and informed care.

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