

NURSING ACTIONS TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE SENESCENCE PROCESS: INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

AÇÕES DE ENFERMAGEM PARA PROMOÇÃO DA SAÚDE MENTAL NO PROCESSO DE SENESCÊNCIA: REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: In Brazil, the term “elderly” applies to people aged 60 or over due to the increase in life expectancy, which has led to an increase in this population in the country. Attention to the mental health of the elderly is crucial to improving their quality of life. Despite negative associations with old age, such as finitude and inactivity, elderly people seek to actively participate in different areas and reaffirm their rights in society. **Objective:** To analyze, in light of the literature, evidence regarding nursing actions for the care and maintenance of the mental health of elderly people during the senescence process. **Methodology:** This is an integrative literature review with articles published in the period 2014-2023, selected through online access using the databases: SciELO, LILACS and BDEnf. **Results:** Seven selected articles emphasized the importance of social interaction for elderly people, allowing them to share their experiences and feel valued in solving daily challenges. Furthermore, they highlighted the practice of physical activities and carrying out daily tasks as essential for maintaining mental health during aging. **Conclusion:** The nurse plays a central role in the advancement of these initiatives, especially in primary health care, being responsible for facilitating moments of interaction and listening with the elderly, guiding both the elderly and the family about the individual’s autonomy in their daily activities and promote well-being in old age.

Keywords: Elderly; Mental health; Nursing; Health promotion.

RESUMO

Introdução: No Brasil, o termo “idoso” se aplica a pessoas com 60 anos ou mais devido ao aumento da expectativa de vida, o que tem levado a um aumento dessa população no país. A atenção à saúde mental dos idosos é crucial para melhorar sua qualidade de vida. Apesar de associações negativas com a velhice, como finitude e inatividade, os idosos buscam participar ativamente em diferentes áreas e reafirmar seus direitos

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na sociedade. *Objetivo:* Analisar, à luz da literatura, evidências quanto às ações de enfermagem para o cuidado e manutenção da saúde mental de idosos durante o processo de senescência. *Metodologia:* Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa de literatura com artigos publicados no período de 2014-2023, selecionados por acesso online utilizando as bases de dados: SciELO, LILACS e BDEnf. *Resultados:* Sete artigos selecionados enfatizaram a importância da interação social para idosos, permitindo que compartilhem suas experiências e se sintam valorizados na resolução de desafios diários. Além disso, destacaram a prática de atividades físicas e a realização de tarefas cotidianas como essenciais para a manutenção da saúde mental durante o envelhecimento. *Conclusão:* O enfermeiro desempenha um papel central no avanço dessas iniciativas, especialmente na atenção primária à saúde, sendo encarregado de facilitar momentos de interação e escuta com os idosos, orientar tanto o idoso quanto a família sobre a autonomia do indivíduo em suas atividades diárias e fomentar o bem-estar na terceira idade.

Palavras-chave: Idoso; Saúde Mental; Enfermagem; Promoção da Saúde.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural process for humans, however, it is necessary to take care of the elderly person in order to improve their quality of life, thus it is extremely important to take care of the mental health of the elderly person (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, when talking about old age, it is not rare to relate the term to the finitude, incapacity and uselessness of the individual, being seen as a social “problem”, which induces a negative view of the aging process, affecting self-perception and mental health of the elderly (JARDIM; MEDEIROS; BRITO, 2019).

By the year 2050, there shall be two billion elderly people in the world, demonstrating the care needs and caregivers focused on this population. During this process, morphological, physiological, biochemical and psychological changes occur with the appearance of various diseases. The most common changes among the elderly are neuropsychiatric, especially depression, which is a multifactorial psychiatric syndrome with psychological, behavioral and physical symptoms. It can be stated that this pathology is an emotional change that raises the morbidity and mortality rate among the elderly population (TREVISAN, 2016).

The quality of life of the elderly population is linked to elements that involve not only physical aspects, but psychological and social. Physical and mental well-being, social inclusion, as well as productivity and a good family structure, cooperate strongly for healthy aging (MENEZES, 2018).

In Primary Health Care (PHC), the professional under the aegis of integrality and longitudinality, the professional is closer to the patient, which allows diagnosing potential risks and pathologies, as well as acting on health promotion. Therefore, the participation of nurses in the process of care for the elderly is essential, especially when it comes to the rescue of independence, autonomy and self-esteem of the elderly, as well as their family relationships and the right to citizenship (TREVISAN, 2016).

Mental health promotion is a great challenge in all health scenarios, and many professionals, when they encounter situations that require procedures aimed at this area, end up seeking information

in the literature. However, there is still a reduced collection of information and strategies for the maintenance of mental health in all stages of human life, especially in the elderly, highlighting the importance of encouraging studies in this area, since everyone, regardless of age, walks towards the same end, aging and senescence (GOMES; XAVIER; SEQUEIRA, 2019).

It is noticed that the health system is fed by the nursing workforce in all areas, from basic care to the most advanced, and that their actions can significantly influence the health of the elderly population. Therefore, the objective was to analyze, in light of the literature, evidences regarding nursing actions for the care and maintenance of the mental health of the elderly during the senescence process.

METHODOLOGY

Integrative literature review, with the objective of knowing the nursing actions that can be developed to promote the mental health of the elderly in the senescence process based on the national literature. The following steps were carried out: identification of the theme and selection of the guiding question; search in the literature through the delimitation of health descriptors; establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles to be selected; definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies; evaluation of the studies included in the review; interpretation of the results; presentation of the integrative review (MENDES; SILVEIRA; GALVÃO, 2008).

Previously, the theme “Nursing actions for the promotion of mental health of the elderly in the senescence process” was chosen, following the guiding question “What nursing actions can be developed to promote the mental health of the elderly person in the senescence process?”. To establish the key terms, a strategy was used for non-clinical research, called by the acronym PICO (Patient, Interest and Context), defining as Patient/Population (P): Elderly; Interest (I): Nursing care in promoting the mental health of the elderly and Context (Co): Aging process (senescence).

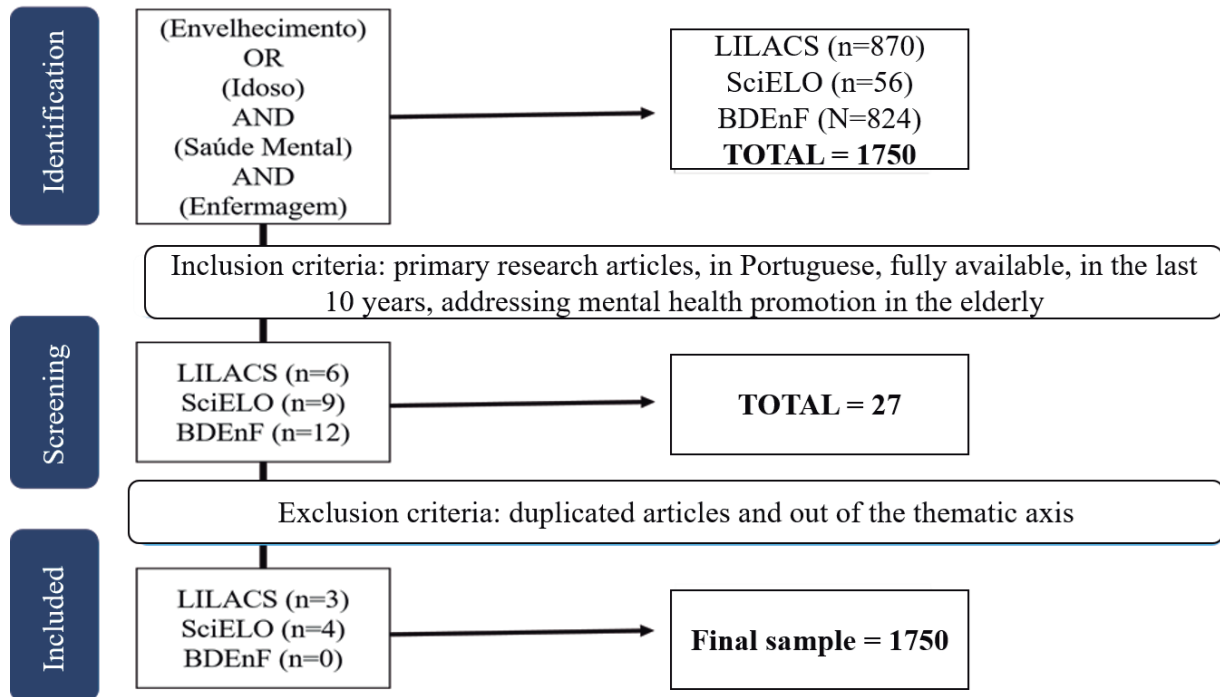
Then, the following Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) were selected: “*Envelhecimento*”, “*Idoso*”, “*Enfermagem*”, “*Saúde Mental*”. After defining the descriptors, the searches were carried out using the Boolean operators “OR” (between the first two descriptors) and “AND”. The survey of articles was carried out between April and May 2024. The articles were selected through a search in the virtual databases: Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO) and Nursing Database (BDEnf).

The inclusion criteria were: primary research article, studies that present actions developed in the national context (Brazil) by nursing professionals to promote the mental health of the elderly; published in Portuguese, referring to the last ten years (2014-2023), available in open access, in full. Duplicate articles in the databases were excluded.

The selection was made in a thorough manner, using the guide of the Main Items for Reporting Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA). Thus, in the present study, 1,750 articles were

found in databases related to the theme. Soon after applying the appropriate filters, the sample data was reduced to 27 articles and followed by the following steps: 1. Reading of the titles of the articles found in the search; 2. Reading of the abstracts of the articles selected by title, in order to verify if they were compatible with the objective of the study; 3. Critical and complete reading of articles that meet the inclusion criteria; 4. Selection of important points found in the articles. At the end of the research, the number of articles was reduced to 7 in total. Figure 2 describes the flowchart with the stages of study selection.

Figure 1 - Flowchart presenting selected studies.



Source: Constructed by the authors.

RESULTS

The review resulted in the selection of seven studies. For better presentation of the results, information about authors, year of publication, journal, type of study, objective, main results and conclusions was extracted. Of these, the most frequent type of study was qualitative (Chart 1).

Chart 1 - Summary of articles used by author, journal/year, type of study and objective.

n.	Article	Author/ Year	Journal	Type of study	Objective
1	Use of free time through expressive resources: contribution to an elderly institutionalized group	Balla; Scortegagna, 2014	Estudos interdisciplinares sobre o envelhecimento	Qualitative research of the exploratory-descriptive type	To evaluate the contribution of the use of expressive features in free time to changes in the mode of living of old-aged people who reside in a Long-Term Care Institution
2	Storytelling: a care technology in continuing education for active ageing	Costa <i>et al.</i> , 2016	Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem	Convergent Care Research (CCR)	To assess relevance and effectiveness of care/educational technology
3	Mental Health of the Elderly in Primary Care: An Analysis of Perceptions of Health Professionals	Garcia; Moreira; Oliveira, 2017	Revista Kairós - Gerontologia	Qualitative study, exploratory-descriptive in nature	To analyze the care practices in mental health of the elderly in Primary Health Care (PHC), based on the perceptions of professionals in the Family Health Strategy (FHS).
4	Conviviality groups for elderly people in primary health care: contributions to active aging	Previato <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Revista de Pesquisa: Cuidado é fundamental	Qualitative, exploratory-descriptive study	To analyze the contributions of the elderly conviviality groups to active aging from the perspective of their participants.
5	Sexuality in old age: knowledge/attitude of nurses of Family Health Strategy	Evangelista <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP	Cross-sectional, exploratory, descriptive, quantitative study	To evaluate the knowledge and attitudes of Family Health Strategy nurses regarding sexuality in old age
6	Recreational games for a group of older people: impacts on mental and cardiovascular health	Pelazza <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Rev. Soc. Cardiol. Estado de São Paulo	Quantitative-qualitative approach	To promote mental and cardiovascular health through physical activity and recreational games
7	The importance of a training program on active aging from the perspective of elderly individuals	Reis <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem	Qualitative research	To assess the results of a training program focused on the well-being of elderly individuals from the perspective of users

Source: Constructed by the authors.

The articles highlighted the benefits of promoting well-being and autonomy to the elderly through various strategies that permeate the lives of the elderly in all areas, in order to maintain autonomy and promote their inclusion in everyday activities. In addition, they highlight the lack and inaptitude of professionals and the health system itself that persist in treating the elderly's health in a merely ambulatory and pharmacological way (Chart 2).

Chart 2 - Synthesis of articles used by results and conclusions.

n.	Main Results	Conclusion
1	The study shows that the elderly demonstrated greater interest in familiar activities or previously experienced and greater adherence to playful activities in comparison to manual activities. These activities contribute to a significant improvement in their routine and quality of life.	The use of playful activities brings benefits to the way of being and being of the elderly residents, reflecting on their improvement of quality of life. This practice has revealed itself as an important strategy of care, which should be stimulated regularly and continuously.
2	Popular stories told caused reactions from which the categories emerged: Solidarity; Respect for the other; Imagination, dreams, hope and culture of the Amazonian imagination. This practice resulted positively, with a change in the quality of life of the elderly, in the psychological domain.	“Storytelling” has revealed innovative technology, relevant and effective resource for health education, especially for active aging.
3	Attention to the mental health of the elderly in APS is configured by outpatient care practices and the presence of a conceptual transition in the view of the process of aging and mental health.	It was found the need for strategies that intend to work focused on the integrality of health care and promotion.
4	Three thematic categories emerged: “Living Group as an opportunity for socializing leisure for the elderly”; “Living group as a learning space for the elderly”; “The importance of the coexistence group in the process of health promotion and active aging of the elderly.”	The perception of the elderly in the face of participation in the coexistence group referred to moments of leisure, socialization, learning and improvement of physical and mental health, contributing to expand the quality of life as active aging
5	Participants who declared permanently receiving health education and health education on sexuality showed a significant increase in favorable knowledge.	Nurses have adequate knowledge about sexuality in old age, but still present in conservative attitudes. Investing in permanent health education processes can improve nurse’s knowledge and practice.
6	The study highlights that there were discrete but positive changes in reducing systolic blood pressure, pulse pressure and weight loss, and it was noted through the interviews that participants were remarkable awareness of the need for greater care with their own health.	Playful activities combined with physical activity are effective for healthy aging, improving quality of life, social participation, mental and cardiovascular health, emphasizing the importance of interprofessional actions for health promotion.
7	From the analysis, three classes emerged, to which the significant words are associated: health-activity (the word health was associated with movement, the sense of requesting conditions for action); Expective-Activity (assumed a positive meaning for the opportunity to participate in the activities); Mind-body unit (composed of entities that interact reciprocally, acting on a dynamic balance). The Activity-Expectative Class stands out.	Research has revealed that the elderly consider it important to have expectation, that it is materialized in satisfaction and involvement with life, as well as the ability to remain active from a perspective of body unity. Future projects should focus on stimulating mental and physical functions to promote active and healthy aging.

Source: Constructed by the authors.

DISCUSSION

For a better understanding, the results were discussed in thematic categories, namely: “Nursing actions aimed at the care of the mental health of the elderly in the senescence process”, “The role of nurses in the care and prevention of mental illnesses, related to the acceptance of aging” and “The challenges for the promotion of mental health in the elderly”.

NURSING ACTIONS AIMED AT THE CARE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY IN THE SENESENCE PROCESS

The study by Costa *et al.* (2016) highlighted the exercise of memory and self-knowledge as a tool to re-signify the aging process, because it enabled stimulating dialogues in social interaction and sharing of knowledge, in addition to providing coexistence in mutual help group. These findings corroborate the literature, which highlights the importance of leisure and social activities as means to improve autonomy and active aging. (PREVIATO *et al.*, 2019).

Older studies converge with the findings of this research, by highlighting community therapy as a space for sharing and promoting the mental health of the elderly. ANDRADE (2010) infers that the sharing of life of these elderly people has helped in the reduction of emotional suffering and, in turn, contributes to the recovery of family and social ties, aiming at the formation of solidarity support networks.

The use of playful activities, in addition to filling the free time of the elderly in a pleasurable way, also contributes to give opportunity to free expression as a therapeutic resource for their well-being and improvement of quality of life (BALLA; SCORTEGAGNA, 2014).

Pelazza *et al.* (2019) also highlighted that the physical activities and involvement of the mind-body unit provide discreet improvements in the elderly in affective, inter-relational, psychomotor and vital parameters. On the other hand, Reis *et al.* (2021) say that the impact of physical activity, by itself, does not have a direct reflection on the quality of life of the elderly, but has in the self-perception of health and negative form as influence. Both studies demonstrate that physical activity should go beyond the simple movement of the body, but highlight a social vision of these activities, which in turn affects inclusion and raises self-esteem, thus providing the feeling of pleasure and promoting active aging.

Other findings, in agreement with Reis *et al.* (2021), highlight that the beliefs that physical health is the main determinant of quality of life of older adults, traditional perception of the biomedical model, may limit the potential of actions developed for this population (LEANDRO-FRANCIA; GIARDINI MURTA, 2014).

Other authors also emphasize the importance of promoting and encouraging natural activities of the individual, which are often excluded from the life of the elderly, such as sexual practice. According to some authors, sex at any age contributes to raising self-esteem and autonomy (EVANGELISTA *et al.*, 2019). Converging to this, study on continuing education in the elderly (2013) says the consolidation of the rights of the elderly will only be possible if we include them in society as equals, avoiding the judgments of disability associated with aging, to allow and stimulate the elderly to keep functional capacity is essential for the prevention of mental illness at this stage.

The actions of mental health of the elderly should prioritize the specificity of this public in an integral perspective, which goes beyond drug therapies and clinical support. It requires holistic and

integrative interventions, psychological accompaniment, social support and guidance to the family/caregiver of the elderly (GARCIA; MOREIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2017).

THE ROLE OF NURSES IN THE CARE AND PREVENTION OF MENTAL ILLNESSES, RELATED TO THE ACCEPTANCE OF AGING

Primary health care (PHC) was highlighted in the studies as the main scenario for carrying out actions aimed at promoting and preventing mental illness in the elderly, with the figure of the nursing professional playing a crucial role in preventing mental illness in the elderly, since this population is susceptible to a number of risk factors that may contribute to psychological distress. Reis *et al.* (2021), in line with Pelazza *et al.* (2019), highlight that nurses are responsible for providing information about the importance of mental health, warning signs of mental problems and self-care strategies for elderly people and their families. In addition to early identification, through regular assessments, nurses can timely identify signs of mental health problems in the elderly, enabling early and appropriate interventions.

It is peaceful to understand the importance of embracement and active listening as essential interventions in nursing practice, since it is fundamental for the nurse to be able to receive the patient in an empathetic way, providing with an active listening to understand their complaints, fears and needs. Offering emotional and psychosocial support to the elderly can contribute to the prevention of mental health problems, providing a space for the expression of feelings and concerns (ALBUQUERQUE; DOS REIS, 2020).

Guidance and counseling are activities intrinsic to the nurse's performance, carried out with the objective of providing information, clarifying doubts and guiding patients on the best practices to be adopted. This intervention can be performed individually or in groups, and must be adapted to the specific needs of each patient (GARCIA; MOREIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2017).

Encouraging participation in social and leisure activities can help maintain the mental well-being of older adults, preventing social isolation and depression. According to Costa *et al.* (2016), creating friendly environments for the elderly, stimulating solidarity between generations is fundamental for inclusion and stimulation of this public. Other authors highlight that the nurse should promote interaction activity and stimulate mental and physical functions in order to meet the idiosyncrasies of the elderly population, so as to contribute to active and healthy aging (PREVIATO *et al.*, 2019).

THE CHALLENGES FOR THE PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ELDERLY

Studies show that the greatest challenge is centered on the lack of knowledge and willingness of professionals to prevent mental illness in the senescence process. According to Garcia, Moreira

and Oliveira (2017), care for the elderly is part of a care process based on the outpatient-medication binomial, especially when analyzing the health of the elderly person and its specificities, iatrogeny, polypharmacy and medicalization of life. These factors have a negative influence on the quality of life of the elderly, being necessary to take a more comprehensive look at the needs of this population in order to minimize the impacts caused by this care system.

In a similar way, Evangelista *et al.* (2019) show that the nurse's assistance to the elderly is restricted to performing activities focused on routine medications, vaccination and risk/violence situation, and demonstrate the need to reflect that the training processes of nurses need to combine theory and practice, valuing the social and cultural aspects of the assisted population, since this would be fundamental for a higher quality of care.

CONCLUSION

Nursing plays a key role in preventing mental illness in the elderly, adopting a holistic and patient-centered approach to promote the mental health and well-being of this vulnerable population. Studies show that promoting interaction activities - group activities - enables the transformation of realities, raising reflection of experiences and processes of suffering of each individual, within a singular collective. In this context, group therapies emerged as an effective means to combat mental illness.

Moreover, stimulating activity for mind-body exercises as games and dynamics are essential, physical activities were highlighted in the studies, because in addition to promoting biological changes in the body, they also contribute to increased self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well, the encouragement of pleasurable practices such as sexual relations that go beyond penetration. The promotion of mental health and consequent prevention of the elderly's psychological suffering do not require many financial resources since most activities only require the professionals' acceptance and empathy with this public. There was a need for more comprehensive vocational training and studies aimed at promoting the mental health of the elderly.

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