

Contributions of nurses to the field of labor in promoting workers' health

The labor is considered a factor that generates and modifies the conditions of life, illness and death of men, meaning that the same work that dignifies the man may cause him suffering and disease when performed under inadequate conditions, not in accordance with the psychophysiological human capabilities.

The approaches related to the relationship health-labor contemplate, throughout history, qualitative leaps and significant benchmarks, involving the Occupational Medicine, Occupational Health and Workers' Health, being the latter, the most current and comprehensive approach and whose object is the process of health and illness related to labor, in search of conditions and environments that are healthy, contextualized in the socio-political moment of a given society.

The Occupational Health has as its scope the multidisciplinary approach and the inter-sector action, with the objectives of overcome the understanding and the closed and fragmented interventions; this discipline enables the participation of workers, as subjects of their life and health, able to contribute with their knowledge to the advance of the understanding of the impact of labor on the health-disease process and to intervene politically and to promote the workers' health.

Nursing is part of the Occupational Health and has as its field of practical activity, especially, the Specialized Safety Services and the Occupational Health of business, including various sectors (seaport, rural and hospitals) and the Regional and State Reference Centers of Occupational Health. Many nurses specialized in Occupational Health are acting in professional training in technical schools and universities, in the specialty of Occupational Health Nursing and in Postgraduate courses – master and doctorate degrees *stricto sensu* - oriented to form researchers.

In study we conducted with the aim of characterizing the practice of occupational nurses, in the country, we identified that 76% of nurses working in Occupational Nursing were registered as specialist in the Federal Nursing Council and had the following characteristics: 89% female gender, 65% aged between 41 and 50 years, 76% white, and 69% actives in the southeast region of the country in educational institutions, government, factories, chemical and textile industries. The main tasks performed by nurses were in clinical and administrative activities, using longer working hours on administrative tasks, scheduling medical appointments, and, in educational and supervising activities⁽¹⁾.

The production of knowledge in Occupational Nursing has subsidized better working practices, promoting the workers' health and helping to expand the labor market for these professionals. Thus, similar to other areas, the production of knowledge is strongly related to Postgraduate courses, which have a strategic role in forming qualified human resources, in fomenting critical and creative dialogues between the researcher and the reality, in the capacity of intervention of the results obtained in research in the society, and in the contribution to the create public policy.

When analyzing the construction of knowledge in Occupational Health Nursing, arising from theses and dissertations produced in Nursing Graduate Programs in the country⁽²⁾, we found that the production of knowledge in the field of Occupational Health Nursing was predominantly aimed at the identification of situations in their own field of work, and, tentatively targeted on problems such as: child and slave labor, forms of violence in the working place, morbidity of workers by external causes, and precarious working conditions in various activities of the productive process, that exposes workers to occupational hazards and diseases and to the changes occurred in the world confronting forms of work organization and the use of innovative technologies.

The results of research contributed: to the diagnosis of how the professionals of a nursing team, are living and working, in different settings; to detect occupational hazards to which they are exposed; to single

out the kind of accidents they suffer and the more common diseases caused by the type of occupation and work; being all these indicators of great importance to elaborate preventive and promotional improvements for the workers health and working conditions.

Nurses must continue studying the work peculiarities of their profession, however, it is necessary to expand the contributions in the production of knowledge in Occupational Health with a focus on national and international policies in the area, on policies of health and worker health, and, on the current social and economic demands, with the challenge of acting in the care of workers in their various production processes, in the perspective of prevention, surveillance and promotion of the worker health.

The journal *Acta Paulista de Enfermagem* has contributed to disseminate scientific knowledge in the field of Occupational Health, produced by academics and health professionals, by acknowledging the importance of this area for Nursing and for the multidisciplinary area of Occupational Health.

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