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**EDITORIAL**

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**DISTANCE EDUCATION AS A SPACE FOR NURSING RESEARCH**Ana Luísa Petersen COGO<sup>a</sup>

*The expansion of distance education in nursing is undeniable, be it undergraduate, graduate, continuing, or health education. Informatics enables a growing mediation and increases opportunities to reach different audiences, thus lessening geographic distances. That happens because social relations being established in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are different than before, especially when you consider actions directed to people below 30 years of age. These people, called "digital natives", are comfortable with a technological mediation that enables effective participation in several activities in an autonomous and individual way<sup>(1)</sup>.*

*There is no question about the existence of appropriate distance and hybrid education proposals, as there is no question about the indispensability of presential education to other proposals. And that is the main point to discuss: one learning modality does not exclude and is not better than the other, but they are different resources that can promote a meaningful learning. We should also remember that there are people that are not digitally included or that prefer not to use technological resources, and we should respect their characteristics.*

*When you consider the triad of teaching, research, and extension you can see that distance education offers to nurses the opportunity of reaching different contexts, getting them closer to users, students and colleagues, each increasingly connected. The expansion of internet access in the beginning of this century made several academic and professional educational institutions to stimulate the use of virtual environments and the training of teachers on technical and pedagogical aspects of digital educational technologies. Social networks are no longer a space exclusive of the private life but also provide information and exchange between organizations and internet users<sup>(2)</sup>.*

*Given the speed of the implementation of digital technologies, it is up to us, researchers, to reflect and to propose advances in nursing research. The possibilities of exploring data produced in digital environments by adapting and elaborating on known methodological procedures enriches the field of research and makes it more challenging to researchers<sup>(3)</sup>.*

*Always keeping our focus on the social and ethical commitment that nursing research has, we nonetheless try to foster the exchange between researchers from several fields of knowledge, such as education, linguistics, communication, sociology, informatics, psychology, among others, always trying to better the results of our studies. Once again Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem answers to the plurality of nursing research, presenting articles that show current research in such fields as collective health, mental health, elderly care, child care, among others.*

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