

Health education through means of communication: contributing to the formation of nursing students*

Educação em saúde através dos meios de comunicação: contribuindo para a formação dos estudantes de enfermagem

Educación en salud a través de los medios de comunicación: contribuyendo para la formación de los estudiantes de enfermería

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This study is an experience report on the use of certain media (radio and newspapers) for the dissemination and access to safe information about healthcare, as an extracurricular strategy in the formation of nurses. Its conceptual methodological framework was *Health Literacy*, which is a process made up of: understanding and critical evaluation of the information to be disseminated, the use of safe information regarding healthcare that can aid in decision-making. It started in 2013, using local and university means of communication. The undergraduate students decided about the publishing of informative texts and the themes to be transmitted through the radio. In general, the dissemination of safe information on health has been considered as a practice with the potential of transforming the life conditions of the populations. The use of local media contextualizes the language to the target audience, allowing for a broader access to the information by the population. Since this is an extracurricular activity, undergraduates could experience spaces of innovative technologies for health promotion.

Descriptors: Health education; Communications media; Students nursing.

Este estudo tem como objetivo relatar uma experiência sobre a utilização de mídias (rádio e jornal) para difusão e acesso a informações seguras sobre cuidado em saúde, enquanto estratégia extracurricular na formação de enfermeiros. Teve como arcabouço conceitual metodológico a *Literacia em Saúde*, processo constituído por: compreensão e avaliação crítica das informações a serem difundidas e empreendimento de informações seguras sobre saúde capazes de apoiar a tomada de decisão. Iniciou-se em 2013 utilizando-se de veículos comunicacionais locais e universitários. Publicações dos textos informativos e dos assuntos reproduzidos na rádio foram definidas pelos acadêmicos. De forma geral, a difusão de informações seguras em saúde tem sido considerada prática potencial à transformação das condições de vida das populações. A utilização de mídias locais contextualiza a linguagem ao público alvo, permitindo maior amplitude de acesso das populações às informações. Sendo esta uma atividade extracurricular, possibilitou-se aos graduandos vivenciarem espaços de tecnologias inovadoras para a promoção da saúde.

Descritores: Educação em saúde; Meios de comunicação; Estudantes de enfermagem.

Este estudio tiene como objetivo relatar una experiencia sobre la utilización de medios de comunicación (radio y periódico) para difusión y acceso a informaciones seguras sobre cuidado en salud, como estrategia extracurricular en la formación de enfermeros. Tuvo como arcabuz conceptual metodológico la *Alfabetización en Salud*. Proceso constituido por: comprensión y evaluación crítica de las informaciones a ser difundidas, emprendimiento de informaciones seguras sobre salud capaces de apoyar la toma de decisiones. Se inició en 2013 utilizando vehículos comunicativos locales y universitarios. Publicaciones de los textos informativos y de los asuntos reproducidos en la radio fueron definidos por los académicos. De forma general, la difusión de informaciones seguras en salud ha sido considerada como práctica potencial para la transformación de las condiciones de vida de las poblaciones. La utilización de medios de comunicación locales, contextualiza el lenguaje al público-objetivo, permitiendo mayor amplitud de acceso de las poblaciones a las informaciones. Como siendo actividad extracurricular posibilitó a los graduandos vivenciar espacios de tecnologías innovadoras para la promoción de la salud.

Descriptores: Educación en salud; Medios de comunicación; Estudiantes de enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

Daily, through internet, thousands of news are published, addressing many themes, such as: politics, sports, entertainment, culture, education, and health. However, even though it is easy to access, this information must be analyzed carefully. It is necessary to carry out critical analysis regarding its reliability even before the habits they suggest become one's conduct¹.

According to the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, data from the Brazilian Research on Media from 2015, carried out in 848 cities with 18,312 16-year-old or older interviewees shows that nearly 55% of them heard a radio station once a week, and 22% read weekly. It stands out that the radio and newspapers are still essential vehicles for information in Brazil, despite the advent of internet².

Considering this, radio stations and newspapers are important tools to disseminate information about conducts regarding wellbeing. It should be highlighted that information about health are essential for knowledge to be acquired and for the adoption of healthy behaviors. However, the quality of information disseminated by the media must be guaranteed. Therefore, the amount of information about health involves: content selection, the potential of the content to be applied to solve problems and to guide decision-making. Safe knowledge in this process contributes for the autonomy of people when it comes to their health³.

Autonomy is a principle of health promotion that is guaranteed in the goals for the millennium of the United Nations for 2030, and it is directed towards the increased access to safe information for beneficial care. Therefore, it seeks to offer universal coverage, which is expressed by the need of guaranteeing a healthy life and promoting a healthy lifestyle for all, from all ages⁴. In this context, nurses are worldwide protagonists for the achievement of a better health level for the peoples⁵.

However, there is a lack of qualified nursing professionals related to the inadequate geographical distribution of these workers in the different countries. This

reality is expressed considering the composition of abilities and competences that permeate the education of this professional⁵.

Questions are raised about how the nurse can use the different media to instrumentalize the population regarding their health care, leading them to autonomous self-care. In the specific case of Brazil, a country where universally accessible health is guaranteed as a constitutional right, there is a need for carrying out experiences which can address the way in which nurses act in the media, transmitting information about autonomy and health promotion⁵.

The use of media for transmitting information about health, despite being common in recent years due to the fact that people are connected through many different platforms, is still seldom explored as a space for scientific production^{6,7}. Considering all the above, this study aims to offer an experience report on the use of certain media (radio and newspapers) for the dissemination and access to safe information about healthcare, as an extracurricular strategy in the formation of nurses.

METHOD

This is an experience report on the initiative of nursing undergraduate students who participate in the *Programa de Educação Tutorial* (Program of Tutorial Education - PET), regarding their use of informational media to disseminate health practices.

Created in 2006 as part of the main axis of the Public Health Policies, the PET-Nursing at the Federal University of Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM) has as its members, under the guidance of a professor, students who receive grants or volunteer for the project and carry out activities aimed at offering the students experiences that are not present in the conventional syllabus of the course, as a way to reach an all-encompassing academic formation⁸.

The experience was guided, both in its description and its development, from the perspective of the methodological and theoretical framework that is "*Health Literacy*". This theory can be defined as: the

group of abilities that involve knowledge, motivation, and the competencies required to access, understand, evaluate, and apply information regarding health in order to evaluate situations and make decisions in daily life regarding the care with one's health, disease prevention and health promotion, as to maintain or improve one's quality of life during one's lifetime⁹.

Health Literacy is a term firstly used in the 1970s in the United States of America, a period marked by the struggle of social movement activists to guarantee social justice. A clearer language was increasingly demanded from the messages produced by public health programs in the country¹⁰.

In Brazil, this term was translated literally: "Letramento". However, this theme is still not very disseminated. It still affects the access and understanding of information by the population regarding healthcare and disease prevention. On the other hand, low literacy is frequently accompanied by shame

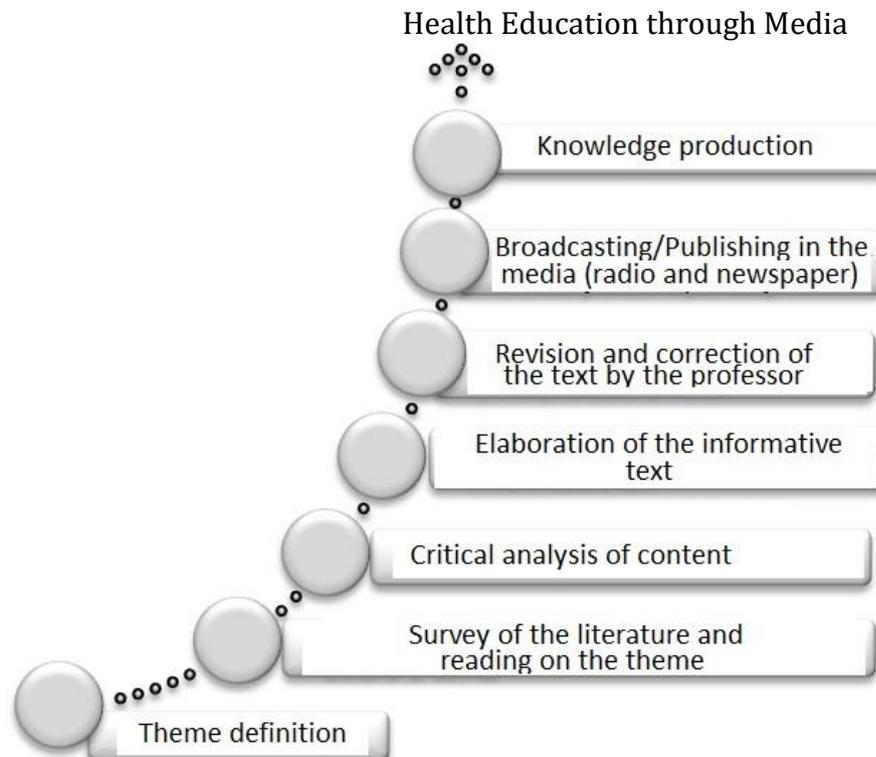
and a lower capacity of understanding how to prevent diseases and promote health¹¹.

This theory integrates a process constituted by: 1) access to knowledge; 2) understanding the information; 3) evaluating safe data on health; 4) exercising critical judgement; 5) analyzing and making decisions based on health references; and 6) solve problems.

Considering these perspectives, the thesis mentioned is essential for the social, economic, and health development, for which education is a vital process, since through it abilities are acquired to maintain self-care and participation in decision making¹²⁻¹⁴.

Considering these aspects, the experience being reported was made to improve Health Literacy, by disseminating safe information through local media: The University Radio Station and the newspaper *Abadia Notícia*, both pre-existing media from the city of Uberaba-MG, following the flowchart in Image 1.

Image 1. Flowchart for the development of the PET-Nursing activity Health Education through Media. Uberaba, Minas Gerais, 2017.



RESULTS

The activity of Health Education through Media involved fourteen students from the PET and the professor who acts as their advisor (Image 1). The activity of Health Education through Media started in the University Radio 109.9 Mhz in 2015, and in the Newspaper Abadia Notícia in 2013.

It already involves, approximately, four years of intense labor and dedication, under the guidance of the professor and the collaboration of professionals/specialists invited to aid in the elaboration of informative texts on the theme of health to be published in the newspaper or transmitted via radio.

The media University Radio 104.9 Mhz reaches public from upper and middle classes, also reaching other classes due to its versatile and qualified attractions. It has regional coverage, including the entire regions of Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba in the state of Minas Gerais, reaching a radius of approximately 180 km from Uberaba-MG. It reaches many cities, such as Alagoas/MG, Campo Florido/MG, Delta/MG, Ponte Alta/MG, Planura, Veríssimo/MG, Conquista/MG, Sacramento/MG, Nova Ponte/MG, Santa Rosa/MG, Santa Juliana/MG, Almeida Campos/MG, Frutal/MG, Água Comprida/MG, Aramina/SP, Igarapava/SP, Ituverava/SP, Pedregulho/SP, Franca/SP, and others.

The newspaper Abadia Notícia, distributed free of charge, is disseminated in two different ways: through monthly 50 thousand printed copies destined for the local public of the city of Uberaba-MG, and online, in a website which has the potential of reaching an even larger audience.

The themes of the Health Education activity in the University Radio 104.9 Mhz have been defined according to the calendar of the Ministry of Health and/or defined by the management of the radio.

After a theme is selected, the student researches the best evidences on the theme under the guidance/supervision of the professor, elaborates the draft of the text and takes it to be analyzed and corrected by the professor. When necessary, the text is

referred to a specialist in the field who agrees to collaborate, generally a professor from the university or a health professional from the General Hospital at UFTM.

After the text is reviewed and its language is adapted by the radio journalists, the texts, which are up to one minute in length, are recorded in the Radio studio, or by the student, using their cellphone. When the recording is made on the phone, it is later sent to the professional responsible for the Radio, so that it can undergo technical quality improvements. In some cases, this procedure had to be repeated. Each text was transmitted three times a day during one or two weeks, according to a schedule made by the technical management of the radio. From 2018 on, the texts started being transmitted throughout the entire month.

Regarding the newspaper Abadia Notícia, the themes have been defined or suggested monthly by the editors of the newspaper and are generally highly relevant and interesting for the population. Some themes were suggested by the PET-Nursing team.

Similarly to the case of the University Radio, after the theme is decided, two or three students, under the guidance/supervision of the professor, investigate the best evidences about the theme, elaborates the draft of the text, which is then analyzed and corrected by the professor or by another professional with experience in the subject. This text has been sent, up to the 15th of each month, to the editor of the newspaper for technical improvements and to be inserted in a newspaper section called "Mais Saúde" (Better Health).

Themes addressed in the University Radio and/or in the Abadia Notícias newspaper in 2017 include: 1) HPV - human papillomavirus, 2) yellow fever, 3) tuberculosis, 4) sexual violence, 5) yellow May (traffic accident awareness month), 6) blood donations, 7) neonatal heel prick test, and 8) common winter diseases. The subjects discussed in the radio were: 1) yellow fever, 2) intellectual deficiency/Down syndrome, 3) HIV - human immunodeficiency virus, 4)

worker's health, 5) kidney diseases, 6) healthy habits, 7) hypertension, 8) Parkinson's disease, 9) child and adolescent cancer, 10) smoking, 11) urinary infections, 12) glaucoma, 13) neonatal heel prick test, 14) viral hepatitis, 15) Alzheimer's, 16) cholesterol, 17) blood donation, 18) diabetes, and 19) national traffic day.

DISCUSSION

The act of communication has been with mankind since its beginning, and is connected to many fields of knowledge, such as health, as a way to guarantee that this right is cared for and is available to all citizens¹⁵.

In the health field, as in the other fields of society, the use of new technology is essential to increase knowledge and empower the community with more information. In this context, an emerging challenge is that of increasing the access of the population to safe information regarding health and self-care¹⁶.

With that, the dissemination of information becomes a practice that can potentially change the conditions of life and health of populations. Consequently, media that disseminate information are crucial tools for health professionals when they wish to disseminate information about diseases, health promotion, and prevention¹⁷.

The population themselves tend to use this type of media to disseminate their experiences with diseases, exchange ideas, and express anguish, giving to this virtual space collaborative, interactive, and even therapeutic features for the resolution of its health demands¹⁷.

Information on health, transmitted by media, tend to empower the population regarding healthcare. First and foremost, using information disseminating media to transmit information about safe health practices is coherent with health literacy. The main consequence of this practice is to amplify the criticism regarding the acquisition of pertinent content to the choice of how to lead a healthy life¹⁸.

However, although media are tools that can improve health, the insertion of health

literacy is still a construct. This can be noticed through researches in databases, which indicate that there are few on the subject in Brazil¹⁷. However, the use of media can positively interfere in the process of learning and becoming critical regarding better health practices, leading the individuals involved to be autonomous in the construction of their becoming¹⁸.

Despite the fact that this is a local experience report regarding the use of information disseminating media, this experience can be replicated in similar settings, especially in contexts that involve integration in the elaboration of extramural experiences for health promotion.

The contact between nursing undergraduates and new technologies, such as informational media, potentially expands the educational horizons of these professionals, who then understand ways to care for health, disseminating information that can reach populations from different locations. This experience still has the potential of raising discussions about initiatives carried out in programs of tutorial education, since there are few publications on the theme.

CONCLUSION

The dissemination of information on health by informational media has the potential to contribute in the creation of interactive competencies for critical judgement, autonomy, and health decisions, made using safe information.

The use of local media such as radio and newspapers, in general, uses a language which is the same of the target audience, enabling the population to have a broader access to safe information on health practices.

Operationally, the development of this academic activity, as an extracurricular activity, makes it possible for health professionals, especially nurses, to see a glimpse of innovative spaces and technologies for health promotion.

The contact with this experience while still in graduation makes it possible for health professionals to carry out

communicational strategies, considering the dissemination of healthcare actions, the guidance for disease prevention, and the advertising of health promotion actions.

As a result, this article suggests that other researches should be carried out, evaluating the impact of this initiative on the audience (the people who use the information), and on the students, regarding how this intervention changes their undergraduate course education, so that they get increasingly closer to the real health needs of the population.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Isabela Aparecida Gonçalves Prada, Sabrina Karla de Souza Cubas and, Fernanda Carolina Camargo took part in the conception, bibliographic research, and writing. **Divanice Contim e Fernanda Carolina Camargo** took part in the writing and critical review.

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