

**Non-pharmacological methods for pain relief during childbirth: workshops for Nursing****Métodos não farmacológicos para alívio da dor no trabalho de parto: oficinas para Enfermagem****Métodos no farmacológicos para alívio del dolor en el parto: talleres para Enfermería**Daysa Araújo Ferreira Pinto<sup>1</sup>Aline de Paula<sup>2</sup>Beatriz Hartz Liebl<sup>3</sup>Gabriela Augustin Coelho<sup>4</sup>Tatiane Herreira Trigueiro<sup>5</sup>Silvana Regina Rossi Kissula Souza<sup>6</sup>

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This is a descriptive research with a qualitative approach carried out in the obstetric center of a public maternity hospital in Southern Brazil, from September to December 2017. It aimed to demonstrate changes in the perception and practice of nursing staff after continuing education activity about the use of non-pharmacological methods for pain relief during childbirth. Audiorecorded workshops were used and the data were interpreted through thematic content analysis. Eight workshops were held in the unit's four shifts with 21 professionals, four nurses and 17 nursing technicians. Three categories emerged: "*Permanent education*", which was considered deficient; "*Benefits for the parturient*", with the reduction of unnecessary interventions and "*Changes in daily practice*", which requires updates. There was a need to expand educational activities that enable theoretical and practical reflection, in order to integrate teaching and service, improving quality of care and ensuring women's rights to a humanized birth.

**Descriptors:** Nursing; Labor, Obstetric; Pain; Education, Continuig; Humanization of assistance.

Esta é uma pesquisa descritiva de abordagem qualitativa realizada no centro obstétrico de uma maternidade pública na região Sul do Brasil, no período de setembro a dezembro de 2017, que teve como objetivo demonstrar mudanças na percepção e prática da equipe de enfermagem após atividade de educação permanente acerca do uso de métodos não farmacológicos para alívio da dor no trabalho de parto. Utilizou-se oficinas audiogravadas e interpretou-se os dados pela análise de conteúdo temática. Realizou-se oito oficinas nos quatro turnos da unidade com 21 profissionais, sendo quatro enfermeiras e 17 técnicas de enfermagem. Emergiram três categorias: "*Educação permanente*" destacada como deficitária; "*Benefícios à parturiente*", com a diminuição das intervenções desnecessárias e "*Mudanças na prática cotidiana*" que requer atualizações. Constatou-se a necessidade de ampliar as atividades educativas que possibilitem a reflexão teórico-prática, de maneira a integrar o ensino e serviço, melhorando a qualidade da assistência e assegurando os direitos das mulheres a um trabalho de parto humanizado.

**Descritores:** Enfermagem; Trabalho de parto; Dor; Educação continuada; Humanização da assistência.

Esta es una investigación descriptiva de enfoque cualitativo realizada en el centro obstétrico de una maternidad pública de la región sur de Brasil, en el período de septiembre a diciembre de 2017, que tuvo como objetivo demostrar los cambios en la percepción y la práctica del equipo de enfermería después de la actividad de educación permanente sobre el uso de métodos no farmacológicos para el alivio del dolor en el parto. Se utilizó talleres audiogravados e se interpretó los datos para el análisis del contenido temático. Se realizaron ocho talleres en los cuatro turnos de la unidad con 21 profesionales, cuatro enfermeras y 17 técnicas de enfermería. Se han establecido tres categorías: "*Educación permanente*", que se considera deficiente; "*Beneficios para la parturienta*", con la reducción de intervenciones innecesarias y "*Cambios en la práctica diaria*" que requiere actualizaciones. Se constató la necesidad de ampliar las actividades educativas que permiten la reflexión teórica y práctica, con el fin de integrar la enseñanza y el servicio, mejorando la calidad de la atención y garantizando los derechos de las mujeres a un trabajo de parto humanizado.

**Descritores:** Enfermería; Trabajo de parto; Dolor; Educación continua; Humanización de la atención.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he delivery care model has undergone significant changes throughout history and, with these changes, the childbearing process is no longer an intimate, familial and female event. Instead, it has become a medicalized process with several interventions, marked by the professional-authoritarian user, with trivialization of pain and suffering, associating vaginal birth with a traumatic experience<sup>1</sup>.

In order to change this biomedical model and make the parturient the protagonist of this process once again, changes have been reestablished in obstetric routines that point to improvements<sup>2</sup> based on the emergence of new proposals and public policies that improve quality of care during labor and childbirth. In this direction, the World Health Organization published the Guide to Good Practices in Childbirth Care in 1996, and it is now being replaced by the guide "Intrapartum Care: For a Positive Childbirth Experience"<sup>3</sup>.

The use of non-pharmacological methods for pain relief during labor, which are recommended in this guide<sup>3</sup>, provide assistance that increases the woman's autonomy during the birth process. These methods are accessible, inexpensive and beneficial not only for pain relief, but also for reducing stress and anxiety levels<sup>4</sup>.

In a survey carried out in Brazil between 2011 and 2012 with 23,940 women, it was identified that, of the 56.8% pregnant women at usual risk, less than a third received care in accordance with good practices<sup>5</sup> recommended by the World Health Organization; of that, the use of non-pharmacological methods for pain relief during labor reached only 26.7% of women, and the presence of an obstetric nurse in direct delivery care increased the rates of application of these methods<sup>5</sup>.

In Brazil, professional nurses specialized in Obstetrics are legally supported to act in the care of women in the delivery and birth process. Therefore, they play an important role in the provision of non-pharmacological methods, relieving pain and promoting autonomy of the mother in terms of her choices<sup>6,7</sup>. The latest WHO Childbirth Care Report recommends and encourages the use of non-pharmacological techniques for relaxation and pain relief in labor for a positive experience. Brazilian public policies for care during normal birth also point to the need to apply non-pharmacological methods to relieve pain during labor, in order to counteract the care that intervenes with invasive technologies<sup>8</sup>.

A systematic review published in Cochrane emphasizes that relaxation techniques, yoga and music can play a role in reducing pain and increasing satisfaction through pain relief in labor, however more randomized clinical trials are needed to increase evidence<sup>9</sup>. In this sense, given the need for research related to the theme, it is important to implement the Brazilian policy on permanent education, which suggests that theory and practices of activities of health professionals are intertwined in their daily lives, and that situations may emerge from this to be problematized, so that learning is meaningful, allowing for reflection and transformation of the care provided<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, this research aimed to show changes in the perception and practice of nursing teams after continuing education activities about the use of non-pharmacological methods for pain relief in labor.

## METHODS

This is a descriptive research with a qualitative approach carried out with the nursing team of the obstetric center of a public maternity hospital in Southern Brazil, from September to December 2017. The inclusion criteria were: being part of the nursing team, work in the obstetric center and be available for the workshops.

To carry out the workshops, an adapted methodology was used<sup>11</sup>. At work, learning and experience took place from the daily lives of professionals, which can provide transformations and benefit continuing education, since during the workshops, reflection on non-pharmacological methods for pain relief in the work of childbirth, such as: massage, breathing

technique, exercise ball, immersion and aspersion bath, herbal medicine and aromatherapy, music therapy, relaxation techniques, maternal mobility, birthing chair, foot reflexology and application of heat or cold, and on practice.

The workshops were audio-recorded and later transcribed in full. Participants were coded by alphanumeric codes, to ensure anonymity and the letter N, designated to Nurses and the acronym NT to Nursing Technicians. The transcripts were analyzed through content analysis, of the thematic type<sup>12</sup>, which is organized into three stages: pre-analysis; exploration of the material and treatment, inference and interpretation.

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Health Sciences Sector of the Universidade Federal do Paraná, under No. 2.063.525 and complied with the ethical precepts of research in resolution 466/2012 involving human beings.

## RESULTS

95.4% of the sector's professionals or 21 professionals participated in the total daytime teams, being 17 Nursing Technicians and four Obstetric Nurses, divided into four shifts: a morning team, an afternoon team and two night teams.

There were eight workshops, two in each shift so as not to jeopardize work. The workshops took place at the rest room for the professional team from the random delivery, to each participant, of a form that described a non-pharmacological method, addressing its mechanism of action, benefits to the parturient, the recommendations and how to apply.

In the activity itself, it was requested to read the method, aloud, in order to discern and share their perceptions, experiences and reports, interacting and explaining their reflections with their work team. After exposing the topic, the team was first oriented to reflect on the role of Nursing in labor, corroborating the Brazilian legal aspects that support the application of non-pharmacological methods.

At the end of each workshop, the following question was asked: *"How can your work benefit from the application of non-pharmacological methods to relieve pain in labor?"*. This approach was intended to evaluate the activity performed. There was good use and the opportunity to update.

Three categories emerged: *"Permanent education"*; *"Benefits for the parturient"* and *"Changes in daily practice"*

### **Permanent education**

Participants reported a deficit in terms of professional and institution preparation for the correct application of non-pharmacological methods of pain relief during labor. They also referred to the workshop as a training opportunity that would help in decision making:

*Having this type of training strengthens the knowledge we already have, for us to say: No, that's right, we are on the right path. And it adds things I didn't know about, more specific things for each method. (N1)*

*We don't go in here and someone gives a course or something saying: Look, this is a non-pharmacological method, you have to do it like this, so and such. You get in here and pick up the routine, ask each other and you learn by word of mouth, not from someone teaching you. (NT1)*

*When performing an intervention in practice, we need to base our actions on some theory, which shows evidence based risks and benefits. (N2)*

### **Benefits for the parturient**

Here, the possibility of a time for exchanging information was evidenced, which provided greater affinity with the topic and how to facilitate its applicability:

*I think everything we learn when exchanging information is really cool. Sometimes we think it's right to do it one way and then see that it's not, that if we do it another way, it will be more effective for the patient. Everything we learn is cool. (NT5)*

*You are bringing news, you were looking for new things for us, there is a lot that we already knew, but you are looking for different things to make our work easier, to make it easier for the patient, to make it a more pleasant environment, I thought the workshop was good. (NT6)*

*These are things that we can take to the patients, they are not absurd things that are beyond our work, so you can be sure that they contributed a lot to our knowledge and to our work, and especially to the patients. (N2)*

### **Changes in daily practices**

It was verified by the reports the importance of the theoretical-practical correlation, in the provision of assistance with theoretical basis:

*The workshop was very valid because you bring up the question of what we are doing, if it is correct with the literature, sometimes we pass something on to them, and they do not even know if they are saying the right thing, if they are indicating the right thing. ( NT1)*

*Because we're seeing a theory, but in our practice we'll be able to assimilate theory and practice and do it better, so it's the idea that through knowledge you can't lose sensitivity, but with knowledge, you can increasingly add it and know how to use and how to put the methods. (NT7)*

### **DISCUSSION**

Assistance during labor by the Nursing team is recommended because they are professionals with less invasive actions, with low intervention rates, such as analgesics, instrumentalization of childbirth, amniotomy and episiotomy<sup>13</sup>. For better and adequate care, the Nursing team needs training when offering non-pharmacological methods for pain relief during labor.

Regarding the implementation of non-pharmacological methods, in a survey conducted at the maternity hospital in the northern region of the state of Minas Gerais, with 40 postpartum women, it was observed that the non-pharmacological methods used during labor had satisfactory effects, minimizing painful sensation, making them more calm and relaxed, the most used being the spray bath<sup>14</sup>. And the partner's collaboration and the guidance and support received from nursing professionals for the use of these methods provided comfort, support, strength, tranquility, confidence and help to women during labor<sup>14</sup>. Another study carried out in 2018, which evaluated 15 articles, on the effects of relaxation techniques to control pain during labor, showed that relaxation, yoga, music reduced pain and increased satisfaction with pain relief<sup>9</sup>.

Continuing education is an instrument for learning and updating at work, aiming to intervene in daily life, in order to raise awareness and change in practice, through the construction of knowledge and considering the experience of professionals and encouraging active participation in activities that should be carried out in the work institution<sup>15</sup>. Continuing education is a means of effecting the professionals' learning process, as the thematic workshops enable dialogue, reflection and review of practices, providing subsidies for the systematization of humanized care<sup>16</sup>.

"Permanent Education" is a tool to improve services, throughout teaching integrated with routine actions, which provides the development of skills that improve care, prompting reflection on the practice performed<sup>10,17</sup>. The participants in this study demonstrated the need for the institution to help them in the search for knowledge, promoting educational activities that favor work, so that common sense is demystified and actions are based on scientific knowledge, which provides better care for parturients.

Nurses need to use continuing education as a tool and, along institutions, promote updates and awareness of professionals regarding the perceived needs to improve in-service actions<sup>15,17</sup>. Continuing education modifies the assistance provided, generating reflection on the lived experiences and the information transformed from scientific knowledge, ensuring improvement and security for carrying out the actions<sup>18-20</sup>.

With the second category "*Benefits to parturients*", it can be said that the educational actions that combine theory and practice led professionals to reflect on the care provided to parturients, through the knowledge produced during the workshops. Knowing the non-pharmacological methods for pain relief during labor, their benefits and the proper way to use them, make the birth experience more positive for parturients<sup>21</sup>.

The direct contact of nursing professionals with the patient, the transfer of information and guidance require constant updates so that care is carried out safely and effectively. The workshops revealed the concern to improve assistance to parturients for pain relief during

labor, based on non-pharmacological methods, making learning more meaningful. When reflecting the reality about educational activities, the participants report that the greatest beneficiary is the patient.

As for the category “*Changes in daily practice*”, the transformation of the practice stands out due to the awareness of new possibilities of assistance. Professionals report that theory helps in the correct way to use non-pharmacological methods in order to make the work developed safer and more effective for parturients. Reflection on knowledge and experience in labor makes professionals more active, as it provides confidence and security in the actions performed, leaving common sense aside<sup>19</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

This study showed the importance of continuing education actions as a tool for raising awareness and valuing the experiences of nursing professionals, as well as the need to critically reflect the care given to parturients.

By reflecting the information and experiences in the course of the workshops, changes were observed in care linked to pre-existing knowledge, stimulating the perception of the importance of non-pharmacological methods for pain relief, essential for women in the process of pregnancy and childbirth.

Institutions, in general, should promote more educational activities in order to provide updates on the new resources available, ensuring quality care. They must ensure the means for the professionals to feel that their work is valued and that they act in the most beneficial way for the parturients.

It is believed that awareness occurred, as the topic is relevant to professional practice. The information could encourage the use of non-pharmacological methods for pain relief, aiming to ensure the scientific nature of nursing care.

The study had as limitations the lower participation of night shift teams in relation to daytime due to absences in this shift, in addition to the fact that the research was carried out in a maternity hospital belonging to a teaching hospital, which can bring differences in relation to private or philanthropic.

On the other hand, this continuing education activity allowed us to verify that more studies of this nature are needed in the area of Obstetrics, in order to integrate teaching and work, raising the quality of care and ensuring the rights of women, and also in private and philanthropic.

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### CONTRIBUTIONS

**Aline de Paula** and **Beatriz Hertz Liebl** contributed to the design, collection and analysis of data and writing. **Daysa Araújo Ferreira Pinto** collaborated in the design and writing. **Gabriela Augustin Coelho** and **Silvana Regina Rossi Kissula Souza** participated in the design, collection and analysis of data, writing and reviewing. **Tatiane Herreira Trigueiro** worked in the design, writing and reviewing.

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