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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN FACING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BELÉM-PA: CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

In health institutions to cope with COVID-19, a range of professionals is required, both health workers and support services such as servants, maids, security personnel and all have different working hours, workload and different professional categories. The present work seeks to analyze the performance of health professionals as well as the difficulties faced in their work environment and the importance of these professionals in the fight against COVID-19 in Belém do Pará. Data collection was performed using a collection instrument which was built on the Google® Forms platform and disseminated via the internet, through applications and social networks: WhatsApp, applied from June to September 2020 to health professionals, especially the public facing the pandemic. In the application of the survey 36 respondents answered the online form. There is a lack of planning, public policies and basic care for health professionals, in addition to work improvements. The research generated data and information that can encourage managers and public agencies to confront and combat COVID-19 and protect health professionals.

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INTRODUCTION

In health institutions to cope with COVID-19, a range of professionals is required, both health workers and support services such as servants, maids, security and all have working hours, workload and different professional categories (Miranda, 2020). It is well known that the pandemic due to the new coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), poses a challenge to the global health system, precisely because of the many infected with expressive numbers of patients in different countries and the demand for resources that are indispensable for their coping as intensive care in hospitals and among others (WHO, 2020). Health professionals (attendants, nursing technicians, nurses and doctors) they are at the forefront in the care provided, regardless of the type of care and the health situation (Miranda, 2020). Among these health professionals, Nursing Professionals represent approximately 2.2 million in Brazil who work in different regions of the country (Cofen, 2020). Nursing involves working together with all other areas within health care establishments in the search for quality care based on

scientific bases. Health professionals are undoubtedly very important in combating the new coronavirus, but it is necessary to analyze the performance of these professionals, their main difficulties in the work environment, check if there are enough Individual protection equipment (EPI), as well as workload and, among other issues, in order to describe the role of health professionals in combating COVID-19 in the city of Belém PA and showing its importance, which is a highly relevant topic as it is a current theme and which has a vision of leaving reflections and ideas to improve primary care for professionals of health. According to Jones (2020), health professionals are being affected by COVID-19, in Spain, 13% of cases were confirmed in health professionals, with reports of deaths among nurses. In Italy, approximately 20% of health professionals were infected, with 100 deaths among doctors and 26 among nurses (Remuzzi, 2020). According to Adams (2020), China, totaled 3,000 professionals infected with 22 deaths. Through the initiative of the Federal Nursing Council, an observatory was developed in which nursing professionals can report their possible symptoms, these reports presented until April 13, 2020, 1,203 cases of illness and 18

deaths (COFEN, 2020). Other relevant issues are involvement with patient care; The conditions and organization of work is little reported; The use of protocols and recommendations for individual hygiene measures and use of protective equipment (WHO, 2020). And they are baseline, however insufficient for the general control of dissemination and exposure to the new corona virus, in which the protective measures provided for in the clinical protocol of the coronavirus, in Brazil, concern biosafety (BRASIL, 2020). However, there are reports of professionals who denounce poor working conditions, taking into account hygiene, exhilarating hours, lack of training, including the insufficiency or unavailability of protective equipment (AMB, 2020). Thus, this study is of paramount importance as well as encouraging the support of managers in coping with COVID-19. Thus, it is essential to analyze the performance of health professionals as well as to analyze the difficulties in their work environment in the face of combating COVID-19.

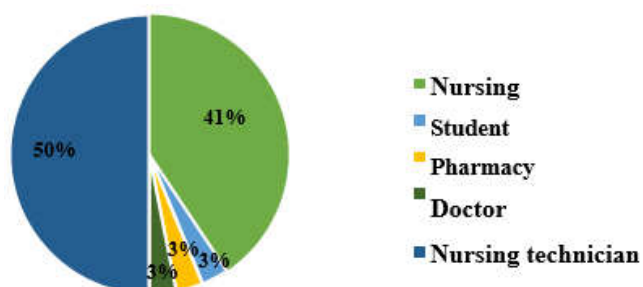
METHODOLOGY

Data collection was carried out using an instrument built on the Google® Forms platform and disseminated via the internet, through applications and social networks: WhatsApp, applied from June to September 2020 to health professionals facing the fight against the pandemic coronavirus. The form refers to the work routine to investigate possible contamination by covid-19. In the application of the form, he sought to be asked about the main difficulties faced in the face of the pandemic COVID-19 in the professional environment, in an open way. In addition, to complement the research, studies were selected using electronic search in the databases: (MEDLINE, via PubMed and via VHL), Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS, via VHL), (BECS, via VHL) and SciELO. The search strategy in the electronic databases included research published in the last 5 years (2016-2020). For data analysis, the Google Forms platform was used, with the results presented in relation to the number and type of responses, separated into categories defined by the questionnaire itself. The data are also analyzed and tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet. The description of the data has the basic objective of summarizing a series of values of the same nature through a set of tools and techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the application of the survey, 36 respondents answered the online form, however the data was cleaned and 3 respondents were removed who answered the questions twice and another participant excluded from the analysis was from a different area of the survey. Then, the responses of the 32 respondents in the survey were analyzed. When applying the form, the participants' profession was asked, 50% of the respondents are Nursing Technicians, 41% Nurses and 3% each are students, doctors and pharmacists (Graph 1). Health workers, such as doctors, nurses, nursing technicians, community health workers, cleaning staff, doormen and health service attendants are in front line to fight coronavirus; consequently, they are more exposed to contracting Covid-19 (HELIOTERIO et al., 2020). Most of the research participants are nursing technicians and nurses.

Graph 1: Profession of research participants.

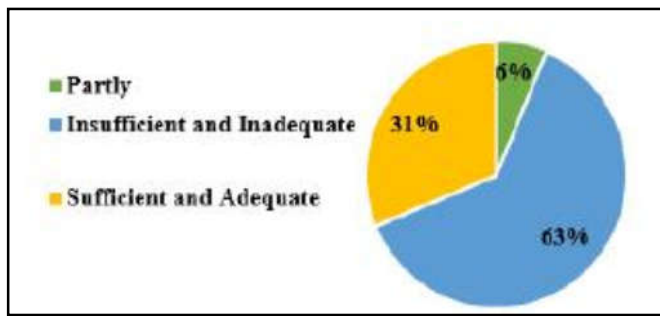


The main difficulties encountered in the work environment in the face of the pandemic of the new corona virus were verified through the form data, most of the respondents mention the lack of EPI, the excess working hours, lack of necessary equipment for attendance, lack of isolation of patients, insecurity and maintaining mental health (Table 1). According to Jones (2020), there are challenges inherent to the health services work process, such as: ensuring the integrality and equity of care for the population; the guarantee of effective communication with the community; provision of technical training for healthcare professionals; availability of inputs and individual protective equipment (EPI) appropriate in quality and quantity; control of surveillance actions in the territory and mass testing of suspected cases and immediate notification of all cases. According to De Oliveira *et al.*, (2020), it is important to highlight among these challenges faced by health professionals, there is self-care, the fear of contagion itself and fear of the infection of family members, adding to the stress generated by overworked shifts and long work hours. Lack of EPI, low stock of medicines, among other situations. According to Esquerda Diário (2020), hospital workers in Belém protest for working conditions, "Our claim is for PPE. They want us to wear the same mask and cloak for the entire month.

Table 1: Main difficulties faced in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in the environment professional

1. What are the main difficulties faced in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in the professional environment

The lack of cooperation from asymptomatic patients
 The lack of necessary equipment to attend
 The large amount of service
 Insecurity
 Patient allocation and adaptation to new standards
 Devaluation by the media and by professional colleagues and fear of infecting those we love
 In one place the EPI, in the other well prepared
 Epi
 It is to select suspicious, symptomatic patients, asymptomatic infected and uninfected patients
 Excess of work
 Lack of epi, having to reuse those that would be for single use.
 Lack of equipment
 Lack of adequate structure and insufficient personal protective equipment required for professionals
 Lack of staff to replace those who were sick, lack of EPI.
 Lack of isolation of patients and lack of EPI.
 Lack of material and EPI
 Lack of professionals and misunderstanding of patients / companions depending on the situation.
 Uncertainties,
 Exorbitant workdays without the necessary rest
 Keep mental health up to date.
 Insufficient material, insecurity.
 Fear and anxiety
 Many. Emotionally impaired due to many deaths in the workplace, lack of adequate EPI, loss of family and friends,
 Many patients for unprofessional
 We didn't have time to rest because we were so patient for a small team that we stayed up for twelve hours, taking medication and taking care of patients who called frequently, in addition to physical tiredness
 I still had the mentality to catch the disease and take it home.
 Own team getting sick and compromising the scale. EPI that was often missing
 at first it was the lack of protective equipment leaving us vulnerable to covid-19
 Few professionals and tight scale.
 Professionals who don't like using these materials.
 Proper use of EPI, staff training



Graph 2. The use of protective equipment

They want us to reuse material exposed. It is lack of consideration ", said one of the nursing technicians who protested. Soeiro *et al.*, (2020) reports that it is necessary to optimize care, as well as the partnership with health equipment at other levels of assistance. In addition, health education is essential for an effective protective network that guarantees safety and quality, especially in the case of a community demand for a viral epidemic. It is important to value health professionals, as well as the provision of quality safety equipment and special attention to physical and mental health (De Oliveira *et al.*, 2020). One of the difficulties presented was regarding mental health. According to the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (2020), the pandemic requires greater attention to health workers also with regard to aspects that concern their mental health, as there has been an increase in reports on symptoms of anxiety, depression, loss of quality of life, sleep, increased drug use, psychosomatic symptoms and fear of becoming infected or transmitting the infection to family members that affect the mental health of these professionals.

CONCLUSION

The present research had the objective of the accomplished work, therefore, the performance of the health professionals, the difficulties faced in their work environment and the importance of these professionals in the fight against COVID-19 were analyzed. The research points out that working hour are long and while the PPE used is necessary, however, they are insufficient and inadequate, other issues addressed are the lack of appreciation of these professionals, one of the difficulties reported by health professionals is maintaining up to date physical and mental health. Despite the various difficulties faced in the work environment, these professionals are very important to fight the coronavirus, as they are facing the fight against COVID-19, providing primary care to those infected. The research generated data and information that can encourage managers and public agencies to confront and combat COVID-19 and protect health professionals. The need for research like this at the national level ends to verify the working conditions of health professionals in the context of COVID-19, with the purpose of obtaining information that can improve the workday and valuing the professionals who work directly in assistance and in combat the new coronavirus pandemic. In view of the research results, the work hypothesis is confirmed, in which it is evidenced that health professionals face quite difficulties in the work environment in the face of the fight against COVID-19.

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