

Communication between hospitalized adolescents and the nursing team: integrative review

Comunicação de adolescentes hospitalizados com a equipe de enfermagem: revisão integrativa

Comunicación de los adolescentes con el equipo de enfermería: una revisión integradora

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RESUMO

Objetivo: conhecer as percepções dos adolescentes hospitalizados sobre sua comunicação com a equipe de enfermagem durante a internação. **Método:** revisão integrativa, incluindo as bases de dados PubMed, BVS, Psycinfo, Scopus e Web of Science. Aplicaram-se os descritores “Adolescent”, “Hospitalization”, “Nursing Care” e “Qualitative Research”. **Resultados:** selecionaram-se sete artigos. A comunicação empática é interpretada pelo adolescente como uma valorização de sua individualidade, transmitindo maior segurança. A comunicação com a enfermagem foi considerada desagradável em situações em que o profissional se comunicou de forma fria e autoritária. Os adolescentes percebem uma comunicação disciplinadora por parte da equipe de enfermagem; contudo, essa é vista por eles como necessária para o seu cuidado. **Considerações finais:** os adolescentes percebem nos profissionais de enfermagem uma comunicação individualizada, mas também um excesso de demandas da equipe que torna essa comunicação mais fria e distante. Torna-se fundamental a valorização dessa ferramenta, para se obter um cuidado qualificado.

Descritores: Enfermagem; Adolescentes; Hospitalização; Comunicação.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze perceptions of hospitalized adolescents about their communication with the nursing team during hospitalization process. **Method:** integrative review, including PubMed, BVS, Psycinfo, Scopus and Web of Science databases. The descriptors “Adolescent”, “Hospitalization”, “Nursing Care” and “Qualitative Research” were applied. **Results:** seven articles were selected. Empathetic communication is interpreted by adolescents as valuing their individuality, conveying greater security. Communication with nursing was considered unpleasant in situations where the professional communicated in a cold and authoritarian way. Adolescents perceive disciplining communication from the nursing team; however, this is seen by them as necessary for their care. **Final considerations:** adolescents perceive individualized communication in nursing professionals, but also an excess of demands from the team, which makes this communication colder and more distant. It is essential to value this tool in order to obtain qualified care.

Descriptors: Nursing; Adolescent; Hospitalization; Communication.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: conocer las percepciones de adolescentes hospitalizados sobre su comunicación con el equipo de enfermería. **Método:** revisión integradora, incluyendo las bases de datos PubMed, BVS, Psycinfo, Scopus y Web of Science. Se aplicaron los descriptores “Adolescent”, “Hospitalization”, “Nursing Care” y “Qualitative Research”. **Resultados:** se seleccionaron siete artículos. El adolescente interpreta la comunicación empática como una valoración de su individualidad, transmitiendo mayor seguridad. La comunicación con el personal de enfermería se consideró desagradable en situaciones en las que el profesional se comunicaba de forma fría y autoritaria. Los adolescentes perciben una comunicación disciplinaria por parte del equipo de enfermería; sin embargo, los jóvenes consideran ese aspecto como siendo necesario para su cuidado. **Consideraciones finales:** los adolescentes perciben una comunicación individualizada por parte de los profesionales de enfermería, pero también un exceso de exigencias del equipo, lo que vuelve esa comunicación más fría y distante. Es fundamental valorar esta herramienta para obtener una atención cualificada.

Descriptores: Enfermería; Adolescentes; Hospitalización; Comunicación.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the period of life from ages 10 to 24, when individuals go through multiple biological, psychological and social transformations¹. Adolescents' perception of health is closely associated with their social context and friendship bonds^{1,2}. It has been demonstrated that this group may have more psychosomatic symptoms associated with hospitalization when compared to other age groups².

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Editor in chief: Cristiane Helena Gallasch; Associate Editor: Sergio Corrêa Marques

According to their reports, adolescents prefer to communicate with the nursing team during hospitalization, as these are the professionals who are the most in contact with young people during that time^{3,4}. However, nursing teams recognize a lack of preparation to communicate with adolescent patients in their training and professional performance and state that these patients require different communication approaches, such as greater tolerance and more flexibility^{5,6}.

Communication is defined as the exchange of information by verbal and non-verbal means, including speech and factors such as body posture and tone of voice⁷. Communication is fundamental for nursing professionals, as it helps creating an emotional bond with the patient and providing effective treatment^{7,8}. Adolescents' perception of good communication also increases their satisfaction with care and promotes a sense of dignity, which is essential to increase their adherence to treatment^{2,3}.

Communication between the nursing team and the adolescent patient is important to make the hospital environment therapeutic for their recovery. Understanding how hospitalized adolescents perceive this communication helps to identify possible weaknesses in care, contributing to the qualification of the care provided by nurses.

Therefore, the objective of this study was to know the perceptions of hospitalized adolescents about their communication with the nursing team during hospitalization.

METHOD

This is an integrative review of the literature, a method that gathers, synthesizes, and analyzes results from previous studies to produce new knowledge⁹. With this purpose, in May 2022, the databases PubMed, Psycinfo, Scopus and Web of Science were searched, using the combination of descriptors "Adolescent AND Hospitalization AND Nursing Care AND Qualitative Research", searching for articles that answered the guiding question: "What are the perceptions of hospitalized adolescents about their communication with the nursing team during hospitalization?".

It is recommended that more than one researcher be responsible for data analysis in order to maintain the rigor of the integrative review⁹. Therefore, two researchers acted simultaneously and independently reading the articles in full. Only the articles by consensus of the researchers were considered. Data was collected according to a structured instrument including authors, title, journal, year of publication, place where the interviewed adolescents were hospitalized and level of evidence of the studies.

The inclusion criteria were: original articles, written in English, Portuguese or Spanish, available for free and in full, including only adolescents (10 to 19 years old) as study population, and answering the question proposed in this review. Duplicate articles were excluded from the review.

For data analysis, the articles were divided according to their levels of evidence. There are seven levels of evidence, and the higher the number, the weaker the evidence: 1 (evidence from meta-analysis of more than one randomized controlled trial), 2 (evidence from individual studies and experimental designs), 3 (evidence from quasi-experimental studies), 4 (descriptive or qualitative studies), 5 (case reports or experience reports), 6 (expert opinion)¹⁰.

RESULTS

Of the 458 articles found in the databases, 40 were selected after analyzing the titles and abstracts. These articles were read in full and analyzed according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Figure 1).

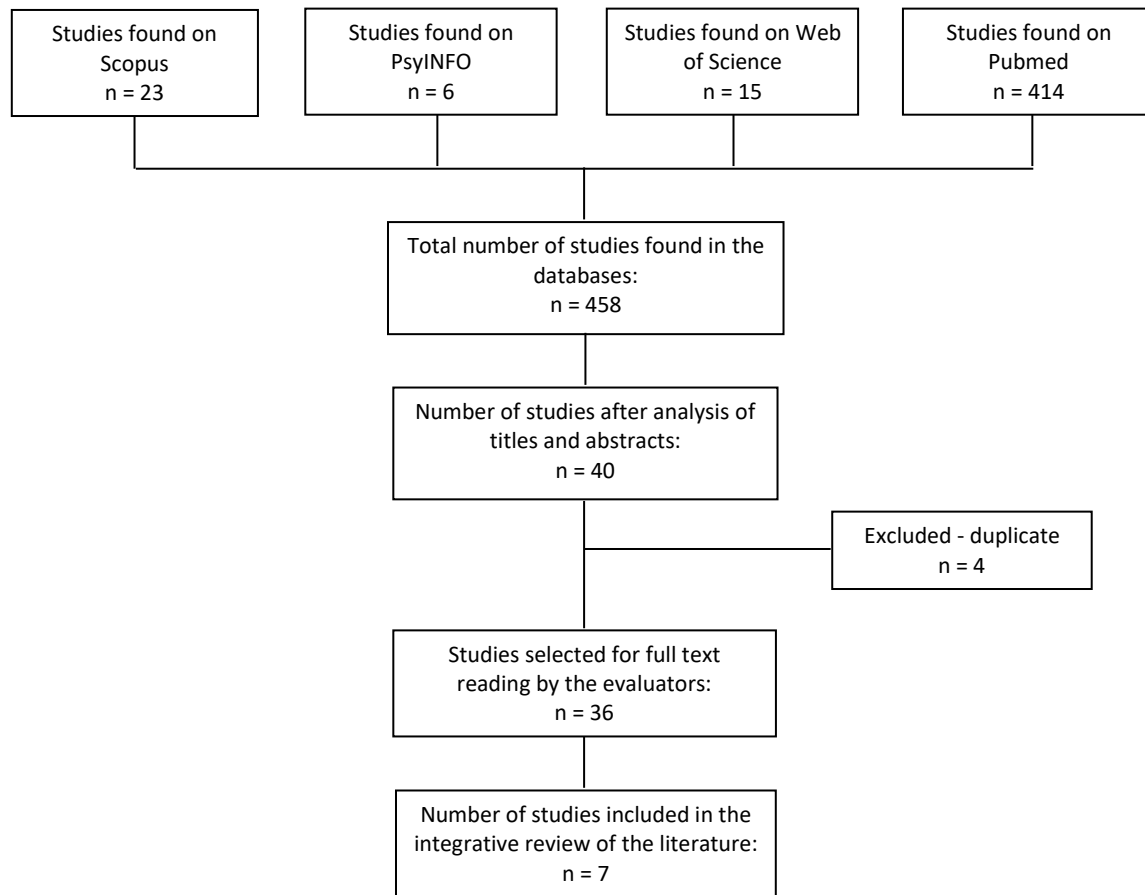


FIGURE 1: Flowchart of the studies selection process. Porto Alegre, RS, 2022.

After excluding duplicates (n=4), the final sample contained seven selected articles, which are detailed in Figure 2.

Authors	Title	Journal	Year of publication	Level of evidence
Olsen IO, Jensen S, Larsen L, Sorensen EE ¹¹	Adolescents' lived experiences while hospitalized after surgery for ulcerative colitis	Gastroenterology Nursing	2016	4
Pavanatto PA, Gehlen MH, Ilha S, Zamberlan C, Rangel RF, Nietzsche EA ¹²	Contributions of playful care in nursing to chemical detoxification due to the use of crack cocaine.	Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem	2015	4
Jamalimoghadam N, Yektatalab S, Momennasab M, Ebadi A, Zare N ¹³	Hospitalized adolescents' perception of dignity: A qualitative study.	Nursing Ethics	2017	4
Salamone-Violi GML, Chur-Hansen A, Widefield HR ¹⁴	I don't want to be here but I feel safe': Referral and admission to a child and adolescent psychiatric inpatient unit: The young person's perspective.	International Journal of Mental Health Nursing	2015	4
Clift L, Dampier S, Timmons S ¹⁵	Adolescents' experiences of emergency admission to children's wards	Journal of Child Health Care	2007	4
Biering P, Jensen VH ³	The concept of patient satisfaction in adolescent psychiatric care: A qualitative study.	Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing	2017	4
Jamalimoghadam N, Yektatalab S, Momennasab M, Ebadi A, Zare N ⁴	How Do Hospitalized Adolescents Feel Safe? A Qualitative Study	The Journal of Nursing Research	2018	4

FIGURE 2: Articles selected for the integrative review of the literature. Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil, 2022.

DISCUSSION

This discussion begins by emphasizing that most of the studies selected were conducted in surgical or psychiatric hospitalization units^{3,11-15}. There is a scarcity of studies on communication with adolescents in oncology units or transplant centers. Furthermore, only one of the studies selected was carried out in Brazil, demonstrating the scarcity of research on the subject in the country¹². Regarding the level of evidence, it is not a surprise that all articles selected were level 4. This level refers to qualitative studies, which is in line with the guiding question proposed in the present study.

The studies selected address communication, both verbal and non-verbal, and adolescents seem to recognize and value these two aspects in their interaction with the nursing team^{3,11-15}. They perceive that communication with these professionals reduced feelings of social isolation and suffering during hospitalization¹⁵. Communication was also considered a decisive factor for satisfaction with the health service, highlighting its importance for aspects such as treatment adherence and continuity among adolescents³.

The studies selected show that adolescents recognize that the nursing team is the most present in the hospital routine, and that young people prefer to communicate with these professionals^{3,15}. They often compare communication with the nursing team to communication with their own parents, citing both as responsible for feelings of safety during hospitalization¹¹. In the temporary absence of parents during hospitalization, adolescents perceive that the presence of a nursing professional who demonstrates care and concern for them as individuals reduces the insecurity of being unaccompanied^{11,13}.

It is noteworthy that adolescents also perceive nursing professionals as trustworthy, with situations in which they tell team members secrets that they would not tell their parents¹³. Communication with these health professionals is seen as an alternative for solving problems that they prefer not to share with their parents¹³.

Studies that address bioethics in nursing demonstrate that confidentiality is considered one of the greatest challenges in the communication with adolescents¹⁶. This is because young people are in a constant search for autonomy, aiming to achieve greater independence, but are not yet legally responsible for themselves. However, in cases that do not pose a risk to the physical integrity of the patient, it is essential to maintain secrecy in order to establish a bond of trust and better communication with these individuals.

In the articles selected for this review, adolescents report that they feel valued when the nursing team calls them by their first name^{3,13,15}. They perceive being called by their first name by the nursing team as a sign of respect, which demonstrates one of the peculiarities of this age group, corroborating that young people prefer not to be seen as patients, but as individuals^{3,13}. This finding is in agreement with studies carried out with other age groups, including children, in which patients - mainly younger ones - report that they prefer more informal communication, without treatment pronouns^{17,18}.

It can be inferred that these specificities are related to the period of adolescence itself, which is characterized by a process of building identity and valuing autonomy. In one of the studies selected, nurses recognize the need to respect the wishes of adolescents and ask them about their preferences in care and treatment¹⁵. Therefore, recognizing that adolescents are participants in their treatment, and not just passive patients, is important for good communication.

There was also an appreciation for the professionals who communicate with good humor and are capable of being playful when the adolescent is not feeling well¹¹. Empathetic communication and a ludic approach are interpreted by adolescents as recognition of their individuality^{12,13}. In psychiatric hospitalizations, adolescents perceive that ludic approaches stimulate interaction and establishment of bonds, recognizing these aspects as necessary for their treatment¹². They claim that friendly and kind communication in the hospital provides a greater sense of dignity and a feeling of safety¹³.

Communication with nursing professionals was perceived as unpleasant in situations in which the professional spoke in a cold and authoritarian way^{3,14}. Adolescents felt uncomfortable when perceiving a mechanic approach, aimed only at carrying out technical procedures and ignoring the wishes and needs of the individual¹¹. It is clear, therefore, that adolescents value autonomy, and when professionals ignore it, their cooperation with treatment is reduced.

Adolescents also point out that, sometimes, it seems that the nursing team does not have time to care for them, due to high works demand, forgetting their requests and performing technical procedures in a quick and impersonal

way¹⁴. This behavior was perceived by adolescents in an international study, but may also occur in the national context, considering that work overload among nurses is common in Brazil¹⁹.

However, it should be noted that this overload is not an impediment to good communication between nursing professionals and adolescents. Instead, the different demands of nursing professionals are recognized, calling attention to the effort made by some professionals, who spend their time in recreational activities with patients, such as watching a few minutes of a movie with them^{13,15}.

The authors selected for this review also highlight that the discomfort with authoritarian approaches does not exclude the need for discipline. Despite being in a process of seeking autonomy and separation from caregivers, they still require monitoring and feel safe with the presence of responsible people^{3,13,16}. The establishment of limits is extremely important for the psychological development of adolescents, who discover themselves through the limits imposed by caregivers²⁰.

Adolescents perceive that the communication with the nursing team is disciplinary, but consider that this aspect is necessary for their care, describing it as “tough love”³. Therefore, adolescents perceive a disciplinary approach as different from an impersonal and authoritarian approach, considering that maintaining a bond of trust and respect is essential for an effective communication.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The role of nursing professionals includes the execution of technical procedures. Communication is the means of connection between patient and professional, and is fundamental for the establishment of bonds and, consequently, for effective patient care. Despite its importance in the field of health, studies on communication with adolescents are scarce, and this age group is commonly studied in conjunction with childhood, without distinguishing its particularities.

Adolescents value individualized communication that supports the characteristics of the age group, such as their search for autonomy and freedom. Likewise, the nursing team is appreciated when there is friendly and personal communication, which may even influence the self-care behaviors of adolescents. This group perceives nursing professionals' effort for individualized communication. However, they also understand that these professionals have an excessive workload, which leads to a colder and more distant communication.

The findings of this review demonstrate the importance of knowing the perception of adolescents about their communication with the nursing team, in order to identify facilities and barriers to effective communication. Further research should be conducted to develop interventions aimed at improving communication with this age group, assessing the possible impacts on satisfaction with care and well-being of these patients. It is also necessary to have national nursing training focused not only on technical procedures, but also on respectful and humanized communication that observes the particularities of each age group, in order to provide qualified care to hospitalized adolescents.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization, F.C.L.W. e A.C.G.D.; methodology, F.C.L.W. e A.C.G.D.; validation, F.C.L.W.; formal analysis, F.C.L.W. e A.C.G.D.; investigation F.C.L.W.; e D.P.S.; data curation, D.P.S.; manuscript writing, F.C.L.W., D.P.S. e M.E.P.; writing—review and editing, F.C.L.W., D.P.S., M.E.P. e A.C.G.D.; visualization, F.C.L.W. e A.C.G.D.; supervision A.C.G.D.; project administration, F.C.L.W. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.