

## News on Brazilian Nursing in the COVID-19 pandemic

Notícias sobre a Enfermagem Brasileira na pandemia da COVID-19

Noticias sobre enfermería brasileña durante la pandemia de COVID-19

Neyson Pinheiro Freire<sup>1,2</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9038-9974>Daniel Amaral de Castro<sup>2,3</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3733-4613>Maria Clara Marques Fagundes<sup>2,4</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4050-5655>Francisco Rosemiro Guimarães Ximenes Neto<sup>1,2,5</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7905-9990>Isabel Cristina Kowal Olm Cunha<sup>1</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6374-5665>Manoel Carlos Neri da Silva<sup>2</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3923-7473>**How to cite:**

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**Corresponding author**

Neyson Pinheiro Freire  
E-mail: neysonfreire@gmail.com

**Abstract**

**Objective:** To analyze the impact and visibility that journalistic news brought to Brazilian Nursing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methods:** Documentary study developed based on information collected from news sites, news programs, radio programs and written press through clipping; as well as the monitoring of demands performed by the Communication Office of the Federal Nursing Council (Portuguese acronym: COFEN), based on articles of national and international scope. After selection, these were systematized based on the content analysis framework.

**Results:** One hundred and thirty-six news from mass media published from March 16 to May 31, 2020 were selected. Through the analysis, narrative patterns were identified and classified into three thematic categories, namely: Political and Professional Protagonism of Brazilian Nursing; Working Conditions of Nursing Professionals; and Vulnerability, Illness and Death of Nursing Professionals.

**Conclusion:** The news contributed to give greater visibility to the work of the Nursing team, warn of the precarious working conditions to which they are exposed, and raise public awareness of the disease progress among Nursing team professionals.

**Resumo**

**Objetivo:** Analisar o impacto e a visibilidade que as matérias jornalísticas trouxeram para a Enfermagem brasileira durante a pandemia da COVID-19.

**Métodos:** Estudo documental, desenvolvido com base nas informações coletadas em sites de notícias, telejornais, programa de rádio e imprensa escrita, por meio de *clipping*; bem como pelo acompanhamento de demandas atendidas pela Assessoria de Comunicação do Conselho Federal de Enfermagem (COFEN), a partir de matérias de alcance nacional e internacional, que após seleção, foram sistematizadas com base no referencial da análise de conteúdo.

**Resultados:** Foram selecionadas 136 reportagens de grandes veículos de comunicação veiculadas de 16 março a 31 maio de 2020, e sua análise permitiu identificar os padrões narrativos, classificados em três categorias temáticas, que são: Protagonismo Político e Profissional da Enfermagem Brasileira, Condições de Trabalho dos Profissionais da equipe Enfermagem e Vulnerabilidade, Adoecimento e Morte de Profissionais de Enfermagem.

<sup>1</sup>Escola Paulista de Enfermagem, Universidade Federal de São Paulo, São Paulo-SP, Brazil.

<sup>2</sup>Conselho Federal de Enfermagem, Brasília, DF, Brazil.

<sup>3</sup>Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, DF, Brazil.

<sup>4</sup>Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, RJ, Brazil.

<sup>5</sup>Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú, Sobral, CE, Brazil.

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**Conclusão:** As reportagens contribuíram para dar uma maior visibilidade ao trabalho da equipe de Enfermagem, bem como alertar para as precárias condições de trabalho a que estão expostos, além de sensibilizar a opinião pública sobre o avanço da doença entre os profissionais da equipe de Enfermagem.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** Analizar el impacto y la visibilidad que las notas periodísticas proporcionaron a la enfermería brasileña durante la pandemia de COVID-19.

**Métodos:** Estudio documental, desarrollado con base en información recopilada en sitios web de noticias, noticieros televisivos, programas de radio y prensa escrita, por medio de *clipping*, así como también mediante el seguimiento de demandas atendidas por la Asesoría de Comunicación del Consejo Federal de Enfermería (COFEN), a partir de notas de alcance nacional e internacional que, luego de la selección, fueron sistematizadas con base en el marco referencial del análisis de contenido.

**Resultados:** Se seleccionaron 136 notas de grandes vehículos de comunicación publicadas del 16 de marzo al 31 de mayo de 2020. Su análisis permitió identificar los patrones narrativos, clasificados en tres categorías temáticas, a saber: Protagonismo político y profesional de la enfermería brasileña, Condiciones de trabajo de los profesionales del equipo de enfermería y Vulnerabilidad, enfermedad y muerte de profesionales de enfermería.

**Conclusión:** Las notas contribuyeron para dar una mayor visibilidad al trabajo del equipo de enfermería, así como también para advertir sobre las precarias condiciones de trabajo a las que están expuestos, además de sensibilizar la opinión pública sobre el avance de la enfermedad entre los profesionales del equipo de enfermería.

## Introduction

The first case of the new coronavirus (COVID-19/ Sars-CoV-2) in China was identified in a 55-year-old resident of the city of Wuhan, Hubei province by epidemiological screening dated mid-November 2019, which was reported by the South China Morning Post.<sup>(1)</sup> The rapid advance of cases of the new coronavirus, especially beyond China, reaching millions of people worldwide, led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a global emergency of international interest on January 30, 2020.<sup>(2-5)</sup>

Due to the rapid expansion and dissemination of COVID-19 to 114 countries, registering 118,999 cases and 4,291 deaths, the severity of the situation led the WHO to raise the level of risk to humanity and classify the world situation as a pandemic on March 11.<sup>(6)</sup> The disease became a global threat to public health on a large scale, leading to the adoption of measures such as the closure of borders by several countries. As a result, governments around the world implemented important preventive measures, including travel tests to control the spread of the virus.<sup>(7)</sup>

Nowadays, the COVID-19 pandemic is the main subject in the press, digital media, in popular and political debate and pages of scientific literature. This reality is a result of the impact caused by the crisis in people's lives, fear, and, above all, the lack of knowledge about the behavior of the disease and its real consequences.<sup>(8)</sup> COVID-19 has spread across a highly connected world, where all people are virtually connected to each other by cell phone, using global digital social networks such as

Facebook or Twitter to facilitate human interaction and the sharing of information about the virus.<sup>(9)</sup>

COVID-19 has influenced people's daily lives, starting with the obligation to follow rules of social distancing, up to the planning and adoption of health measures to face the crisis. The fact is that COVID-19 has become dominant, especially in the lives of health professionals at the forefront of combating the new coronavirus. In the world, we see the population's solidarity with health professionals. However, this manifestation should not only occur through "clapping campaigns", but also by mitigating the workload on their families, as they are undergoing stress, isolation and emotional distress of exceptional intensity.<sup>(10)</sup>

In this context, nursing professionals have gained prominence in the fight against the new coronavirus, as they constitute more than half of health workers in Brazil and worldwide, have wide territorial capillarity and are essential in combating the disease against which there is not yet a vaccine or treatment proven to be effective. Care based on the clinical management of symptoms and meeting the basic needs strengthens the role of the category.

However, due to the lack of access and scarcity of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the downsizing of professionals in the teams, exposure of risk groups, the need for ongoing education, establishment of conflicting public policies to combat the virus and disease mitigation, Brazilian nursing professionals were the health workers most affected by COVID-19.

On August 10, the Nursing Observatory, created by the Federal Nursing Council (Portuguese

acronym: COFEN) to monitor cases of COVID-19 in the profession, already counted more than 32 thousand nurses, technicians and nursing assistants away from work on suspicion of COVID-19. Of these, 15,642 have tested positive for the new coronavirus and 340 have died, a fatality rate of 1.96%,<sup>(11)</sup> representing the highest number of affected health workers in the world. With this reality, Brazilian Nursing has emerged as one of the main institutional sources of information for national and international journalism, becoming evident in the media on a daily basis, which motivated the development of this study, aimed at analyzing the impact and visibility brought by journalistic news to Brazilian Nursing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Methods

Documentary study developed based on information collected from news sites, news programs, radio programs and written press through clipping (monitoring, analysis and archiving of citations made by the media), and by the monitoring of demands performed the Communications Office of COFEN in the period from March 16 to May 31, 2020.

The study was developed based on information from written press, news programs and digital media of national and international reach, open/free access. Those with restricted access to subscribers were also used as a source of information after digital subscription by researchers.

The initial database was created by means of Google clippings, using the keywords “*Enfermagem*” (“Nursing”), “COFEN” and “*Conselho Federal de Enfermagem*” (“Federal Nursing Council”), in addition to the active search with these keywords and the monitoring of demands performed by the Communications Office of COFEN.

The inclusion criterion was to have “national reach”. Media based in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo prevailed, which reflects the centralized structure of the communication and information industry in Brazil. As for newspapers of international impact, mass media who sought COFEN’s Press

Office in search of guidelines on Brazilian Nursing were selected, such as the Americans “New York Times”, “Wall Street Journal” and “Bloomberg”, the Australian “ABC News”, the Spanish “El País”, the French “France 24”, the Chilean “El Ciudadano”, the Venezuelan “Telesur”, the South Korean “KBS”, the Russian “Sputnik”, and the British “Daily Mail” and “The Guardian”.

Reports published in media without national coverage were excluded, considering aspects such as access, circulation, views and impact. Advertorials and articles broadcast by institutional channels were also excluded, albeit with a national reach, such as “TV Justiça” and “Agência Senado” (Brazilian TV channel and news agency, respectively, both owned and administered by governmental bodies), seeking a reliable representation of the “mass media”. When the same news was published by different media, only one medium was considered and the one with the greatest coverage was selected. The total of 183 reports that met the criteria and had the COVID-19 pandemic theme explicitly in the title or lead were identified. After applying the exclusion criteria, 136 reports remained.

The information was collected for the period between March 16 and May 31, 2020, and cataloged in an Excel<sup>®</sup> spreadsheet with the transcription of contents and speeches in different languages. After systematization, these were analyzed by the content analysis method based on Minayo’s framework<sup>(12)</sup> and using the thematic analysis technique, which involves pre-analysis, material exploration and treatment of results, skim reading; constitution of the corpus; formulation of hypotheses and objectives; clipping of the text in record units; identification of the nuclei of meanings, and the classification and aggregation of information.<sup>(12)</sup>

The definition of categories demanded a qualitative analysis of the content of news in order to identify narrative patterns that are also the object of the present study. It is not only a matter of measuring the reach of Nursing as a source during the COVID-19 pandemic, but above all, evaluating its effect on the journalistic narrative and the themes of greatest repercussion for the working

conditions and professional visibility experienced by the category in such a diverse moment as the pandemic, when the entire network of services and work processes of health professionals are undergoing a reorganization. After the detailed assessment of the content of reports, the three following thematic categories emerged: “Political and Professional Protagonism of Brazilian Nursing”, “Working Conditions of Nursing Professionals” and “Vulnerability, Illness and Death of Nursing Professionals”. After the definition of categories, the information was systematized in tables and the titles of reports inserted in the “Wordart.com” tool for the construction of word clouds for each category, which characterized the product of the thematic analysis of contents.<sup>(12)</sup>

Ethical aspects such as transparency and publicity were observed and complied with in the performance of the study. Since it is based on news already published by the open access media (press, television, radio and digital), there is no additional risk involved to the authors, interviewed persons and networks. Anyhow, the ethical and legal principles of research involving human beings were respected, as issued by Resolutions number 466/2012 and number 510/2016 of the National Health Council.

## Results

The central role of professionals in news of mass media when making complaints about working conditions (such as the absence of inputs and PPE, the situation of health units and the reality of how the pandemic is being tackled in the country), vulnerability, illness and death placed Brazilian Nursing in the daily life of the national and world media.

In relation to the media, the 136 reports selected for this study are distributed as follows: 66.2% are news sites (internet), including media with printed editions, 25.0% news programs (TV), 7.4% radio broadcasting stations (radio), and 0.7% are in auditorium shows (TV). The results are presented by categories identified in the study.

### Category 1 - “Political and Professional Protagonism of Brazilian Nursing”

When analyzing the evolution of news themes, these started with complaints of lack of access, control or shortage of PPE, which were prevalent in the beginning of the pandemic in the country. Subsequently, there was a higher number of articles highlighting the progress of the disease and the deaths of professionals, as well as the political and professional central role of Nursing. This category represented 17.7% of the findings, as described in chart 1.

In chart 1, news in the following media predominate: 70.1% on news sites (internet), including newspapers that also have print editions, 16.7% on news programs (TV), 12.5% on radio broadcasting (radio), related to the political performance of Nursing professionals and entities in the face of challenges in the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the professional protagonism in the face of adversities and tributes from public people, such as religious personalities and artists. Figure 1 shows the word cloud that allows a better visualization of the most cited words.

### Category 2 - “Working Conditions of Nursing Professionals”

This category represented 23.5% of the findings. Among the 30 initial articles, 63% addressed the lack of PPE, demonstrating this was the main source of concern, when the virus had not yet arrived in Brazil, according to the description of articles in chart 2.

In chart 2, reports in the following media predominate: 50.0% on news sites (internet), 40.6% on news programs (TV) and 9.4% on radio broadcasting stations (radio), related to unsatisfactory working conditions and, above all, the precarious and difficult access to PPE, such as surgical mask and N95, cloak/apron, eye protection (goggles or face mask), among others. In the word cloud shown in figure 2, we can also highlight the words: Lack of professionals, protection, nurses, complaints, among others cited in the news.







**Chart 3.** Description of news about the Vulnerability, Illness and Death of Nursing Professionals during the COVID-19 Pandemic

NR	NETWORK	DATE	HEADLINE/SUBJECT	MEDIUM
1	BBC	16/03	"I thought I had been infected when attending a patient": the routine of health professionals who take care of coronavirus cases in Brazil	Digital newspaper
2	BBC	24/03	"We take care of others, but nobody takes care of us": nurses exposed to coronavirus by lack of equipment	Digital newspaper
3	Agência Pública	27/03	Health professionals: "either we care for ourselves or we fall ill"	News Agency - Internet
4	Rádio Web	30/03	Nursing professionals seek psychological care	Radio
5	CBN	31/03	Nursing professionals receive emotional support during the Covid-19 pandemic	Radio
6	Folha de São Paulo	06/04	Podcast debates pandemic pressures on health care professionals and the system	Online newspaper
7	UOL	07/04	Coronavirus: Council counts 16 deaths of nursing professionals	Digital newspaper
8	O Globo	07/04	Brazil has eight nurses killed by coronavirus and other nine deaths await confirmation	Online newspaper
9	G1	07/04	Coronavirus cases in Brazil on April 7	Digital newspaper
10	CBN	08/04	Council counts deaths of health professionals by COVID-19	Radio
11	Rede Record Fala Brasil	10/04	Nursing technician dies victim of coronavirus	TV
12	Época	11/04	On the front line of the fight, health professionals are diagnosed with COVID-19	Online magazine
13	Rede Globo Fantástico	12/04	COVID-19 makes victims among health professionals in Brazil	TV
14	Época	13/04	Groups of psychologists offer voluntary assistance to health professionals	Online magazine
15	CNN	13/04	Coronavirus has already infected 237 nursing professionals in the country	TV
16	O Globo	13/04	In Brazil, 14 nurses died from coronavirus and another 12 deaths are under investigation	Online newspaper
17	Estadão	14/04	Coronavirus: Council reveals 29 deaths of nurses and 36,000 complaints of lack of PPE	Online newspaper
18	UOL	14/04	Dead with symptoms of COVID-19, a nursing technician could not read the bride's farewell message in ICU	Digital newspaper
19	Revista Piauí	16/04	Fear wears white	Online magazine
20	RedeTV	17/04	COVID-19: 30 health professionals died in Brazil, says the Council	TV
21	IstoÉ	17/04	Health bottlenecks	Online magazine
22	G1	17/04	Brazil has 30 deaths of nursing professionals and more than 4 thousand on leave due to coronavirus	Internet
23	O Globo	19/04	Pandemic takes those working in the public health system to the extreme	Internet
24	Rede Globo Fantástico	19/04	ICU overcrowding: Fantástico shows the critical situation in capitals because of COVID-19	TV
25	EBC	20/04	Health care professionals should be careful with pressure and stress	News Agency - Internet
26	Rede Globo	21/04	Encontro com Fátima Bernardes - Rosana resigned from the hospital for fear of COVID-19	TV
27	O Globo	22/04	Coronavirus: four nurses report the exhaustive daily lives of those on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19	Online newspaper
28	UOL	23/04	Casualties in Health	Internet
29	Globo News	23/04	Nurses on leave because of Covid-19	TV
30	Estadão	23/04	Brazil has at least 38 coronavirus deaths in nursing, says COFEN	Online newspaper
31	EBC	24/04	"Together against the coronavirus" campaign tries to protect nursing professionals	News Agency - Internet
32	O Globo	26/04	Covid-19: Councils and psychologists offer online emotional support to healthcare professionals	Online newspaper
33	Rede Globo Fantástico	26/04	Health professionals deal with fear and pressure in the fight against coronavirus	TV
34	R7	27/04	Brazil has 4,602 nursing professionals away due to COVID-19	Online newspaper
35	Época	28/04	"I don't want them to go through this": the alert made by the nursing technician during a live stream days before dying for COVID-19.	Online magazine
36	Telesur	28/04	More than 4,000 nurses are away by COVID-19 in Brazil	Internet
37	Rede Globo	01/05	Encontro com Fátima Bernardes - What is the feeling of Health Professionals?	TV
38	El País	02/05	The fight against coronavirus has women's face	Digital newspaper
39	BBC	02/05	Coronavirus: "Some will not be able to put their foot in an ICU anymore", say therapists about health professionals	Digital newspaper
40	Rede Globo Fantástico	03/05	COVID-19 has saturated the health system in Brazilian capitals and is moving into the hinterlands of the country	TV
41	CNN	05/05	Brazil surpasses the USA in deaths of nursing professionals by COVID-19	Multimedia - Internet
42	El País	06/05	Brazil has already lost more nurses to coronavirus than Italy and Spain	Digital newspaper
43	Sputnik Mundo	06/05	More than 10,000 Brazilian nurses away from work on suspicion of COVID-19	Digital newspaper
44	G1	06/05	At least 76 nursing professionals have died as a result of COVID-19 in Brazil, according to the category council	Digital newspaper
45	UOL	06/05	Brazil exceeds 10,000 nurses on leave and 88 dead, double the number of Italy	Digital newspaper
46	GloboNews	07/05	91 deaths and more than 10,000 nurses away due to COVID-19	TV
47	Rede Globo Jornal Hoje	07/05	Brazil has more deaths of nurses than Italy	TV
48	R7	08/05	Brazil puts 504 nursing professionals on leave for COVID-19 in 24 hours	Digital newspaper
49	EBC	08/05	The number of nursing professionals who died of COVID-19 in Brazil is greater than in Italy	News Agency - Internet
50	Rede Record Fala Brasil	08/05	Professionals in a risk group are required to work at Grande SP	TV
51	Rede Globo Fantástico	10/05	COVID-19: Health professionals are exposed to the risk of contamination by Covid-19	TV

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work environment, and 20% have already suffered violence and aggression (physical, verbal or psychological) in the workplace; 60% report professional exhaustion; and 10% report having suffered a work accident recently.

Nursing experiences the inexistence of a salary policy, the precarious hiring and working conditions, the increase in outsourcing, social and economic vulnerability fostered by neoliberal policies. Moreover, with the increase of the economic crisis in the country, income has fallen and the real value of salaries has decreased, leading Nursing professionals to work double or triple shifts.<sup>(16)</sup>

The pandemic situation of COVID-19 has led Nations to seek the organization of their national health systems to mitigate the disease. This situation quickly showed the needs and weaknesses of health systems, including the protection and health of professionals. In Brazil it was no different, soon the vulnerability of Nursing professionals, doctors, physiotherapists, and other health workers was perceived, mainly due to the overload and precariousness of working conditions, the difficulty of access to PPE, among other reasons.

Brazilian Nursing was already vulnerable to several aspects related to working conditions, as indicated by the Nursing Profile in Brazil survey (*Perfil da Enfermagem no Brasil*)<sup>(15)</sup> and had to fulfill the promise of “not leaving anyone behind”<sup>(13)</sup> with the COVID-19 pandemic. They experienced the aggravation of this situation both from the perspective of the scope of practices and as a result of the broadness and magnitude of the disease, since these professionals are working at the forefront in the care, surveillance and monitoring of COVID-19 cases in the different points of the Health Care Network, whether public (National Health Service, Brazilian SUS) or private/philanthropic.

According to the extract from articles observed in the national and international press about working conditions and the number of deaths, the main fear of nursing professionals is to contaminate themselves and put patients and their families at risk, given the alarming lack of access or inadequacy of PPE.

In March, when the pandemic in Brazil was still in its initial phase and the first death by COVID-19

in the country was recorded on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the Brazilian show *Fantástico* (03/22)<sup>(17)</sup> on TV Globo, showed the routine and challenges of nursing professionals. A BBC news (24/03)<sup>(18)</sup> highlighted the fear of frontline workers, when little was known about the disease and the vital need to use PPE. The title of the article, “We take care of others, but nobody takes care of us”, was an alert with the testimony of a nurse who was infected while treating a patient in a private hospital, both not wearing a mask. The content of the text reveals the tip of the iceberg, showing the unpreparedness of the hospital and the total lack of knowledge about the severity of the disease in Brazil at that time, as the professional was instructed by the institution not to use the protective material “so as not to scare patients”. The article pointed to the urgent need for PPE, a situation that would worsen.

In early April, the newspaper *El País Brasil*<sup>(19)</sup> published a story with the title “Without protective equipment, health professionals report concern after the deaths of two nurses in São Paulo”. At the beginning of April, Brazil recorded 7,910 confirmed cases and 299 deaths of coronavirus, and the Ministry of Health recognized the difficulty in purchasing PPE, such as masks, due to the overheating of international demand for the pandemic, in addition to the recognized deficit in detection tests and the delay in obtaining the results of tests performed.

The topic gained more and more space in the media, with alerts in articles reporting that complaints about the lack of PPE increased by 14%. In the second week of April, the newspapers *O Globo*<sup>(20)</sup> and *Estadão*<sup>(21)</sup> highlighted the deaths and the lack of PPE, reporting the deaths of 29 health professionals and more than 3,600 complaints related to the risk situation of front line workers. On April 11, *Fantástico* denounced the deaths of these professionals.

The *Folha de S. Paulo* (17/05)<sup>(22)</sup> highlighted the issue of lack of PPE days later with the article “Nurses at risk”. In the international press, *The Wall Street* (19/05),<sup>(23)</sup> from New York, addressed the death of Brazilian nurses in the face of precarious working conditions in the pandemic with the article: “Brazil’s Nurses Are Dying as Covid-19

Overwhelms Hospitals”. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) warns that nurses have been “cruelly exposed to danger due to the lack of appropriate, high-quality PPE”.<sup>(24)</sup>

In view of the increase in cases of death and the news migrating to these records, the lack of PPE appears as one of the causes that contributed to the illness and death of Nursing professionals. The failure to protect health professionals has contributed to the spread of the disease, also from health services.<sup>(25)</sup> In addition to this scenario, in Brazil there are still “downsized teams and maintenance of professionals of high risk groups on the front line of care”.<sup>(26)</sup>

With the expansion of the pandemic, health professionals’ access to PPE has become an important global concern. Teams began to assist the supposedly infected population while waiting for access to PPE, or used what was available, although it did not meet the minimum safety requirements. Because of this, health professionals began to express their fear of contaminating their family members.<sup>(27)</sup>

The international scarcity of inputs and PPE needed to combat the pandemic aggravated by the trade dispute between countries has caused international concern; so much so that on April 20, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution calling for global action to rapidly increase the development, manufacture and access to medicines, vaccines and equipment to face the pandemic of the new coronavirus.<sup>(28)</sup>

The articles also addressed the fact that many professionals belonging to risk groups, older adults and people with comorbidities, who should have been removed from the front line in the fight against COVID-19, continued to work. Most nursing professionals who died during the months of March and April 2020 with suspicion and confirmation of COVID-19 belonged to this group. In this sense, The Guardian (27/05) has one of the most striking reports,<sup>(29)</sup> in which the daughter of a nurse who was part of the risk group, says: “My mother was murdered”. The title unfolds on the subhead: “How COVID-19 stalks Brazil’s nurses”. The article also reports that “according to the International Council of Nurses (ICN), this means that more nurses died

in Brazil than anywhere else in the world - including other coronavirus hotspots, such as the USA, where at least 146 died, and the United Kingdom, where the number is at least 77”.

The advancement of cases of patients and death by COVID-19 among nursing professionals, the fear of contracting it or transmitting it to family members, the work overload, and the difficulty of access and the lack of appropriate high-quality PPE has led many to mental disorders. The impact on the mental health of professionals leads many to abandon their jobs, quit and develop depression or panic syndrome.

A multicentric study conducted with 906 health professionals (nurses, doctors, other health professionals, administrators, administrative staff and maintenance workers) of five large hospitals involved in the care of COVID-19 patients in Singapore and India pointed out that 5.3% had moderate to very severe depression, 8.7% moderate to extremely severe anxiety, 2.2% moderate to severe extremely severe stress and 3.8% had moderate to severe levels of psychological distress. Nurses represented 39.2% (355) of the study sample.<sup>(30)</sup>

A cross-sectional study comparing two groups of nurses: those on the front line (exposure group) and others working in the usual wards (group without exposure) conducted in the city of Torbat Heydariyeh, Iran, indicated that the work stress and burnout scores in the group exposed to COVID-19 infection were significantly higher than in the group without exposure ( $p=0.006$  and  $p=0.002$ , respectively). Despite the univariate regression analysis of employment status ( $p=0.047$ ), experience in caring for confirmed or suspected patients with COVID-19 infection ( $p=0.006$ ), hospital resources ( $p=0.047$ ) and stress at work ( $p<0.001$ ) were considered significant risk factors for COVID-19 related burnout. In the multivariate regression analysis, stress at work ( $p=0.031$ ,  $\beta=0.308$ ) was considered a single factor with a significant relationship with exhaustion related to COVID-19 from the front line, and the factor that exerted more influence was stress at work.<sup>(31)</sup>

Recently, from 16 to 18 June 2020, the 8<sup>th</sup> “Triad Meeting” took place. The WHO, the ICN

and the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), brought together more than 600 heads of government, nurses and midwives, leaders and representatives of National Nursing Associations, WHO Collaborating Centers for Nursing and Midwifery, regulatory bodies and the Nursing Now campaign in 145 countries. The report of the meeting highlighted that “nurses and midwives put their lives at risk to respond to the pandemic and provide essential health services”. The Triad Meeting focused on “how nurses and midwives can be protected, their leadership maintained and supported, and their contributions to emergency response, universal health coverage and more health and wellbeing maximized now and in the future”.<sup>(32)</sup>

In the context of the pandemic, given the double work shifts often without the necessary PPE, health professionals have increasingly gained the aura of heroes in the media. As evidenced by an article of *Exame* (08/05),<sup>(33)</sup> showing an unprecedented work by British graffiti artist Banksy in honor of nurses: “Banksy’s work shows nurses as real life heroines”. The work, signed by the most known and anonymous graffiti artist in the UK, shows a child setting aside superheroes like Batman and Spiderman and choosing a health-care professional as inspiration.

Still, unfortunate facts occurred with Nursing professionals, such as aggressions suffered when they performed a peaceful act in honor of colleagues killed by COVID-19, on May 1 (International Labor Day), at the Esplanada dos Ministérios, in Brasília (DF). This contributed to the increase in the number of news explicitly addressing the actions of COFEN, which filed a claim against the aggressors. It was also the week in which the number of deaths of nursing professionals exceeded 100 and began to attract even more attention from the national and international press.

The word clouds figures corroborate this discussion. In category 1, the words Health-Nurses-Death-Nursing-Council were highlighted, showing that the news emphasized the extreme aspects of health and death in the category and highlighting

COFEN. In category 2, the most prominent words were Professionals-Coronavirus-Covid19-Lack-Protection-Complaints, emphasizing the sad reality of the lack of personnel and supplies. In category 3, the most viewed were again Professionals-Health-Deaths-Coronavirus-Covid-19-Council.

Note that Nursing has historically played a major role in the different health systems worldwide, especially in remote locations, in situations of calamity, disasters, wars, terrorist attacks and pandemics. Despite this important health role, the political component still needs to be expanded and must come out of the condition of invisibility to the spotlight with strong leadership and empowerment.

Concerning invisibility around the world, since 2018, the Nursing Now Campaign has been taking place. This is a partnership between the WHO and the ICN that seeks to raise the profile and status of global Nursing by training “nurses that can make an even greater contribution for health improvement around the world” and assuming an “even more influential role in addressing the health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Nursing Now particularly emphasizes extending the influence of Nursing on policies, leadership development and building a stronger evidence base to understand the triple impact of Nursing on health, women’s empowerment and the economy”. This main role, influence and leadership have been occurring with the strong insertion of Nursing at the front of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>(34)</sup>

In April, the ICN<sup>(35)</sup> released 12 main priorities for combating the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, especially for the nursing workforce operating in countries with a high disease burden. Among them, based on the results of this study, we highlight the two following priorities:

1) “Demonstrate public support and recognize the value of nurses to society” - “This pandemic highlighted Nursing as none of us could have predicted. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals and are critical in the response to COVID-19 for the health of populations and for keeping health systems functioning. The public has to play the important role of keeping nurses

and other healthcare professionals safe. They can support nurses and show appreciation for them by continuing to strictly follow the latest public health advice, such as social distancing and self-isolation”; and

2) “Capitalize in Nursing leadership” - “It is imperative that the world’s leading nurses are involved in decision making on policies and planning at the highest level to ensure that over-worked health systems can offer the best possible care to the largest number of patients [...]”. Governments must see National Nurses’ Agencies as key partners “in the formulation of policies, together with their heads of nursing and other professionals in senior positions [...]”. “Health systems and policy makers must make use of their experience and support nursing leaders in clinical settings who are effectively managing various aspects of the response to COVID-19”.

Nurses are fully engaged in responding to COVID-19. They are essential to the pandemic prevention and response efforts by working on the front line, providing first-rate care, especially for complex cases demanding hospitalization. They represent one of the most reliable groups of health professionals, and must advocate for local, state and national policy responses to the COVID-19 outbreak. A global outbreak requires the active participation of the nursing workforce in clinical care, education/training and in the sharing of information on public health and policies. Nurses’ engagement and central role before the pandemic, whether in the development of care or control actions for its mitigation place them as key actors at the end of the outbreak.<sup>(36)</sup> To this end, Brazilian and worldwide Nursing need support from the population, political legislators and government officials at different levels.

## Conclusion

The pandemic emergency of COVID-19 has placed Nursing as an important media source in Public Health. Despite its capillarity and broadness of scope of practices at different levels of care

and scenarios in the Brazilian SUS and an important contingent of professionals, Nursing and its entities (professional councils, unions and associations) have traditionally not had great visibility in the national and international media, even in agendas directly associated with the profession. The prominence of Nursing in the media during the pandemic offers a unique perspective of observing its impact on news coverage. The evaluation of articles also allows the observation of reasons for such reach, both external, associated with the severity of the health situation; as internal, resulting from the ability to generate reliable data and offer trained spokespersons in an emergency situation, contributing to improve health communication strategies. In addition to the visibility gained by Nursing professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, the massive content of news demonstrates that the main media of national and international coverage contributed to raise awareness of the public opinion regarding the disease progress among professionals, revealing the precarious conditions under which many of them develop their practices, further aggravated during the health crisis, in addition to showing the world the importance and performance of these professionals. The articles strengthened the complaints of insufficient PPE, shedding light on the weaknesses of the health system (public and private). The recognition of public opinion achieved with the insistent exposure in the media favors the evolution of issues dear to the category, such as the minimum wage for the category and the 30-hour workday, which, unfortunately, only after a health tragedy like this started to be looked at and addressed with the attention, care and respect they deserve.

## Collaborations

Freire NP, Castro DA, Fagundes MCM, Ximenes Neto FRG, Cunha ICKO and Silva MCN participated in the conception, analysis and interpretation of data, writing and revision of the intellectual content until the final version of the manuscript.



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