






## NURSING IN PALLIATIVE CARE IN DISSERTATIONS AND THESES IN BRAZIL: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY

### ENFERMAGEM EM CUIDADOS PALIATIVOS NAS DISSERTAÇÕES E TESES NO BRASIL: UM ESTUDO BIBLIOMÉTRICO

### ENFERMERÍA EN CUIDADOS PALIATIVOS EN LAS DISERTACIONES Y TESIS DE BRASIL: ESTUDIO BIBLIOMÉTRICO

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**Funding:** No funding.

**Submitted on:** 2018/04/24

**Approved on:** 2019/04/03

#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to analyze the scientific production of Brazilian Nursing, carried out in Masters and Ph. D courses, on palliative care. **Method:** this is a bibliometric study carried out from the thesis and dissertation banks of the postgraduate programs in Nursing in Brazil. **Results:** 148 publications were identified, after which it was possible to select 119 studies published between the years 2000 and 2016, 22 (18.00%) theses and 97 (82.00%) dissertations. The qualitative approach was the most representative, with 86 (72.27%) studies. Predominance of studies in the Southeast and Northeast regions was identified. **Conclusion:** the number of theses and dissertations has increased over the years. There is still a need to envisage other possibilities for the use of more robust approaches and research methods with a greater degree of innovation in the research carried out in the context of the postgraduate course stricto sensu in Brazil.

**Keywords:** Nursing; Brazil; Palliative Care; Education, Nursing, Graduate; Bibliometrics.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar a produção científica da Enfermagem brasileira, realizada nos cursos de mestrados e doutorados, sobre os cuidados paliativos. **Método:** trata-se de estudo bibliométrico realizado a partir dos bancos de teses e dissertações dos programas de Pós-graduação em Enfermagem no Brasil. **Resultados:** foram identificadas 148 publicações, das quais após análise foi possível selecionar 119 estudos publicados entre os anos de 2000 e 2016, sendo 22 (18,00%) teses e 97 (82,00%) dissertações. A abordagem qualitativa foi a mais representativa, com 86 (72,27%) estudos. Identificada a predominância de estudos nas regiões Sudeste e Nordeste. **Conclusão:** o número de teses e dissertações tem aumentando no decorrer dos anos. Ainda existe a necessidade de vislumbrar outras possibilidades para utilização de abordagens e métodos de pesquisa mais robustos e com maior grau de inovação nas investigações realizadas no contexto da Pós-graduação stricto sensu no Brasil. **Palavras-chave:** Enfermagem; Brasil; Cuidados Paliativos; Educação de Pós-Graduação em Enfermagem; Bibliometria.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** analizar la producción científica de enfermería brasileña de los cursos de maestría y doctorado sobre cuidados paliativos. **Método:** estudio bibliométrico realizado en los bancos de tesis y disertaciones de los programas de posgrado en enfermería de Brasil. **Resultados:** se identificaron 148 artículos de los cuales, después de su análisis, se seleccionaron 119, publicados entre 2000 y 2016: 22 (18%) tesis y 97 (82%) disertaciones. El enfoque cualitativo fue el más representativo, con 86 (72%) estudios. Predominaron los estudios de las regiones sudeste y noreste del país. **Conclusión:** el número de tesis y disertaciones ha aumentado con los años; sin embargo, habría que vislumbrar otras posibilidades para utilizar enfoques y métodos de investigación más sólidos e innovadores en las investigaciones de posgrado stricto sensu en Brasil. **Palabras clave:** Enfermería; Brasil; Cuidados Paliativos; Educación de Posgrado en Enfermería; Bibliometría.

#### How to cite this article:

Almeida ARLP, Oliveira FA, Marinho CLA, Leite AMC, Silva RS. Nursing in palliative care in dissertations and theses in Brazil: a bibliometric study. REME – Rev Min Enferm. 2019[cited \_\_\_\_];23:e-1188. Available from: \_\_\_\_\_. DOI: 10.5935/1415-2762.20190036

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the academic training of health professionals, they are educated to fight against death and save lives, as if death were a condition antagonistic to life and a battle to be overcome from technologies that make it possible to prolong the days of life in a way that does not consider the consequences of how the patient will survive, ignoring issues related to quality and, above all, to human dignity. Death becomes a clear example of the misfortune of technologies, in a quest for the maintenance of life, a paradigm on which reflection and little discussion in the academic world can be considered.<sup>1</sup>

From the 1960s, in Europe, the Modern Hospice Movement, which arrived in North America around 1974, expressed as a Movement for Palliative Care, and in Brazil since 1980. The movement constitutes a search for care in the process of dying and at the moment of death, as is the care provided at birth, with respect and dignity in order to minimize the suffering of the dying and their relatives.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, an approach based on integrated practices and actions directed to patients with chronic and progressive diseases, without prognosis of cure, and their relatives, based on controlling pain and other symptoms that involve the biopsychosociospiritual dimensions in favor of prevention and relief from suffering.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, there is concern about how research on this subject has been developed in postgraduate programs *stricto sensu* (Masters and Ph. Ds) in the area of nursing in Brazil. A similar study was carried out in Portugal and revealed that the number of publications on palliative care by nurses in that country is increasing. It notes that productivity growth on the theme accompanies the aging of the population, following the increasing profile of longevity needs.<sup>4</sup>

Considering this scenario and that the palliative care movement in Brazil is more recent than in European countries, it is understood as relevant to make efforts to know what has been produced in our country, in which the Nursing Postgraduate is in a process of expansion, clearly evidenced by the increase in the number of courses and programs, the training of graduates and scientific productivity.<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge about the scientific production of Brazilian Nursing on palliative care, motivated by the real advance in the spaces or environments that make up the academic, professional and doctoral degrees, is a great contribution.

Thus, the question is: which was the academic scientific production on palliative care been developed by Brazilian nurses at the end of their doctoral and master's degree courses and where has it been developed? What types of studies, methodological approaches and participants or object of research have been used by these researchers? Therefore, the study aims to analyze the scientific production of Brazilian nursing, conducted in Master's and Doctoral courses on palliative care.

## METHOD

This is an exploratory, descriptive and retrospective study of the bibliometric type, which used as a basis the documentary research. Bibliometry proposes a dynamic research of a quantitative approach and aims to analyze both how much has occurred on a given subject and what is being produced.<sup>6</sup> It is a way of locating the production of a country's knowledge of the world, of an institution in relation to its country or of scientists in relation to its peers.<sup>7</sup>

Bibliometric research proposes to demonstrate the characteristics of a given phenomenon and undertakes to explicitly and objectively explain them, aiming at the classification of the object to be studied<sup>8</sup> in this study, represented by theses and dissertations.

The search was carried out in the theses and dissertations bank of the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES)<sup>9</sup> and data collection took place in August and September 2017. It had as a data source the digital literature for the collection of information, not constituting, therefore, a study involving human beings, which dispenses with submission and appreciation by the Research Ethics Committee.

The sample was limited to the theses and dissertations in the area of Nursing, considering the following inclusion criteria: studies that addressed palliative care, produced and linked to Brazilian universities (public and private) with programs recognized by CAPES; without delimitation of temporal cut. And as exclusion criteria, the studies that escaped the palliative care theme or were not from the nursing area.

Research was carried out in two stages. At the first moment a search was made in the digital platform *Sucupira* using the georeferential data tool – GEOCAPES<sup>10</sup> base year 2015, for the identification of the programs and respective geographic regions, with the purpose of mapping the quantitative panorama of the postgraduate in Nursing.

The second stage comprised the search in the thesis and dissertations database of CAPES, when "palliative care" was used as keyword in the singular and plural, considering that during collection different results were obtained when considering the number inflection of the noun. In the national literature this variation is notorious, although there is a descriptor, "palliative care", registered and defined in the structured vocabulary of the Latin American and Caribbean Center for Health Sciences Information, also known by its original name of Regional Medicine Library (BIREME) - DeCS - Health Sciences Descriptors. This search resulted in an initial sample of 80 publications when the descriptor "palliative care" was used and 68 when the keyword "palliative care" as used. The limits/filters considered in the searches were: belonging to the large area – Health Sciences; knowledge area; area of evaluation; and area of concentration – nursing.

To organize the data, we used Software Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> version 2010 to systematize the list of 70 graduate programs,

characterizing them by region, institution name, type of program (professional Master's degree, academic Master's degree and Doctorate) and the CAPES concept, besides organizing the variables to be analyzed based on in productions.

With the sample of 148 publications (theses and dissertations) identified, a pre-analysis of titles and abstracts was undertaken. Based on the inclusion criteria, the final sample of 120 publications resulted from the exclusion of those studies that were unfamiliar with the subject or did not fit the nursing area, in addition to a dissertation in duplicate. Thus, this last number was reduced to 119 analyzed publications.

When the final sample was selected, dissertations and theses were downloaded and then they underwent a process of analysis based on the following variables of interest: teaching institution, year of production, level of the course (Doctorate or Master's degree), type of approach, methodological reference and objects or participants of the studies. The downloads were carried out in institutional repositories of the universities.

Also with the use of the aforementioned software, a bibliometric instrument was built based on these variables, described in the form of a spreadsheet, in order to allow better visualization and elaboration of tables for data layout and extraction of information, and finally analyzed by simple descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS

Based on the information contained in the GEOCAPES tool, 54 Brazilian universities (public and private) were identified with 70 postgraduate programs *stricto sensu* in the area of nursing and which integrate the courses of academic, professional and Doctorate degrees in Nursing, namely: 16 academic Masters, 18 professional Masters, two Doctorates and 34 Masters/Doctoral programs.

Of the 54 institutions with programs in the nursing area, in only 31 of them it was possible to identify publications addressing palliative care, with 22 theses defended between 2009 and 2016 and 97 completed dissertations in the period from 2000 to 2016.

In relation to the educational institutions where the studies were carried out, it was verified that the *Universidade de São Paulo* (USP) is the one that has developed the most research on the subject, presenting a total of six (5.04%) theses and 23 (19.33%) dissertations completed in the period 2000-2016. Following this, the *Universidade Federal da Paraíba* (UFPB) which, despite having carried out the first research only in 2011, has already developed 13 studies involving the subject, four (3.36%) being theses and nine (7.56%) dissertations.

At the *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (UFSC), nine researches were developed: two (5.89%) theses and seven (1.68%) dissertations, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Distribution of production by University and by type – N=119. Brazil/BR, 2017

Universities	Thesis (Ph.D)		Dissertations (Master's degree)		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
FURG	1	0.84	1	0.84	2	1.68
UEM	1	0.84	3	2.52	4	3.36
UEPA	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UERJ	1	0.84	4	3.36	5	4.20
UFBA	1	0.84	4	3.36	5	4.20
UFF	0	0.00	4	3.36	4	3.36
UFGO	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UFMA	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UFMG	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UFPA	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UFPB	4	3.36	9	7.57	13	10.93
UFPE	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UFPEl	1	0.84	3	2.52	4	3.36
UFPI	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UFPR	1	0.84	3	2.52	4	3.36
UFRGS	0	0.00	3	2.52	3	2.52
UFRJ	1	0.84	7	5.89	8	6.73
UFRN	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
UFSC	2	1.68	7	5.89	9	7.57
UFSJ	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
UFSM	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UNB	2	1.68	3	2.52	5	4.20
UNESP	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UNG	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
UNICAMP	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
UNIFAL-MG	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
UNIFESP	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
UNIRIO	0	0.00	3	2.52	3	2.52
PHU	6	5.04	23	19.33	29	24.37
USP/RP	1	0.84	0	0.00	1	0.84

Of the total of 119 publications that composed the *corpus* of the research, 97 (81.53%) are dissertations and 22 (18.48%), theses. The oldest research is a dissertation defended in the postgraduate program of the Nursing School of the *Universidade Federal da Bahia* (UFBA) in the year 2000. At that time, this program had only the Master's degree, which is currently a Doctoral program/Master's degree.

In the following 10 years, the number of publications was still very incipient, worth noting that in the years 2001 and 2003 no publication was identified. The first two theses on palliative care were defended in 2009, one with a defense date of December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in the *Programa de Pós-Graduação da Es-*

cola de Enfermagem of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP)/Ribeirão Preto and the other the following day in the ps of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

As of 2011, it was possible to observe a considerable increase in palliative care research, with 2015 having the highest number of theses and dissertations completed, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Distribution of production by year and by type – N=119. Brazil/BR, 2017

Year	Theses (Ph.D.)		Dissertations (Master's degree)		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2000	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
2001	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
2002	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
2003	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
2004	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
2005	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
2006	0	0.00	3	2.52	3	2.52
2007	0	0.00	1	0.84	1	0.84
2008	0	0.00	2	1.68	2	1.68
2009	2	1.68	5	4.20	7	5.88
2010	1	0.84	6	5.04	7	5.88
2011	2	1.68	6	5.04	8	6.72
2012	1	0.84	9	7.56	10	8.40
2013	0	0.00	10	8.40	10	8.40
2014	5	4.20	9	7.56	14	11.76
2015	5	4.20	23	19.33	28	23.55
2016	6	5.06	18	15.13	24	20.17

Regarding the type of methodological approach, it was possible to identify that the qualitative studies were the most representative, with a total of 86 (72.27%), followed by 28 (23.53%) studies that used the quantitative approach. Five studies used a mixed approach (Table 3).

Table 3 - Distribution of production per approach – N=119. Brazil/BR, 2017

Type of approach	N	%
Qualitative	86	72.27
Quantitative	28	23.53
Mixed	5	4.20

If we compare the types of approaches between dissertations and theses, the results show that during the Masters the researchers performed more qualitative (74 - 76.29%) than quantitative (21 - 21.65%) and that much fewer were those of mixed approach, only two (2.06%).

In the Doctoral studies, there was a predominance of the quantitative approach in relative terms, in a total of seven (31.82%), compared to those using the qualitative approach (12 - 54.54%). Regarding the use of the mixed approach, a discrete increase was observed, with three theses (13.64%).

Regarding the types of studies and techniques used for data analysis, it was possible to show that the technique of content analysis was the most used for the organization and analysis of the data, with a total of 27 (22.69%) studies that used it. Next come cross-sectional epidemiological studies, totaling 14 (11.78%), using statistical analyses. Phenomenological studies occupy the third place, with 13 (10.93%) surveys, as described in Table 4.

Table 4 - Distribution of production by type of study – N=119. Brazil/BR, 2017

Type of study	N	%
Rodgers concept analysis	1	0.84
Content analysis	27	22.69
Speech analysis	2	1.68
Bibliometric	2	1.68
Comparative	1	0.84
Convergent care	5	4.20
Prospective cohort	4	3.36
Discourse of the collective subject	1	0.84
Documental	1	0.84
Clinical trial	3	2.52
Case study	5	4.20
Case study using the Calgary Model	3	2.52
Intervention study	1	0.84
Ethnographic	3	2.52
Exploratory	1	0.84
Phenomenological	13	10.93
Oral history	4	3.36
Methodological	1	0.84
Not identified	1	0.84
Action search	2	1.68
Clinical research	1	0.84
Historical research	1	0.84
Almost experimental	3	2.52
Social representations	4	3.36
Integrative review	1	0.84
Systematic review	1	0.84
Theory based on data	4	3.36
Theoretical	2	1.68
Cross-sectional	14	11.78
Clinical validation	2	1.68
Content validation	5	4.20

Regarding the participant – or object of research –, there were 31 (26.06%) studies with nurses predominating. Others had only patients (28 - 23.53%); family members in 18 (15.13%); nurses, technicians and auxiliary nurses in 11 (9.24%) studies and others, 10 (8.40%) had the interdisciplinary team (nurses, doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists, social workers and others) as participants, as can be seen in Table 5. Only six (5.04%) studies used only secondary data.

Table 5 - Distribution of production by participants or research object – N=119. Brazil/BR, 2017

Target population	N	%
Caregivers/Family and patients	4	3.36
Nurses	31	26.06
Nurses and patients	1	0.84
Nurses, managers and patients	2	1.68
Relatives	18	15.13
Family and medical records	1	0.84
Secondary source/articles	4	3.36
Handbooks	1	0.84
Patients	28	23.53
Patients and their medical records	1	0.84
Patients and health professionals	3	2.52
Patients, nurses/health professionals and family members	3	2.52
Nursing professionals (nursing team only)	11	9.24
Health professionals (interdisciplinary team)	10	8.40
Medical records	1	0.84

## DISCUSSION

The growth of research in the Brazilian scenario is related to the pioneering character of Brazil, in the context of Latin America, in what relates to research in the nursing area, not only with the beginning of post-graduation in Nursing, but also considering the growth of production in the area,<sup>11</sup> which has increased in quantitative and qualitative terms in recent years.

In research concerning palliative care, it is possible to dare to affirm that Brazil follows an international trend, with the development of research on this subject in the Brazilian postgraduate scenario, in the Nursing area, which has been growing over the years. This may be related to population aging and to the onset of chronic diseases, as well as to the increase in life expectancy of the population<sup>12</sup> which, consequently, leads to a demand for other possibilities of care that are not only aimed at healing but recognize the need to care beyond healing and for the relief of suffering and preservation of the person's dignity.

Studies<sup>13</sup> reveal a palliative care approach, if the provision of these services is individualized to the different life conditions of each individual. It is worth mentioning that many people, in-

cluding health professionals, still associate palliative care with end-of-life care, especially with cancer patients, even by the profile of these patients, who are more likely to receive palliative care than those with other diseases.

This induces a bad practice of palliative care, so that many times their provision is delayed for the last weeks or days of life, at which point the disease is advanced and specific treatments are no longer effective. Delayed provision of palliative care is then to waste an opportunity to provide better care to patients and families. In developed countries, about 80% of people who die may have benefited from palliative care in the early stages of their illness.<sup>13</sup>

Research<sup>14</sup> which aimed to characterize the research groups, with lines aimed at palliative care, registered in the *Directorio de Grupos de Pesquisa* of the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* (CNPq) between 1994 and 2014, noted an increase in the number of these. Even so, there is still certain disparity between the regions of the country, with a higher concentration of these groups in the Southeast and Northeast, which corroborates the findings of this study in relation to the postgraduate programs with the largest number of publications in the *Universidade de São Paulo* and at the *Universidade Federal da Paraíba*. This is possibly due to the investigations carried out by researchers linked to these groups of pioneering research in palliative care investigations.

As for the first dissertation defense whose research theme is about palliative care, the results present the dissertation defended in the year 2000, whose objective was to “identify the social representations of the family in the development of palliative care to the terminal cancer patient at home”, an investigation carried out with a focus on cancer patients in end-of-life care at home follow-up, a Social Representation study.<sup>15</sup>

Although this study has focused on patients with cancer diagnosis, it is worth emphasizing that, nowadays, the palliative care approach should expand beyond cancer, given the high incidence of chronic noncommunicable diseases, including people living with cancer with comorbidities, which tends to contribute to an overload of symptoms that requires effective control by the palliative care team.<sup>16</sup>

After this first dissertation, it was observed that, for almost a decade, the number of researches was still very timid in this scenario, perhaps due to the lack of services directed to palliative care and to the poor knowledge of the researchers, to the point of feeling encouraged to research about.

In Brazil, records of the first palliative care services date back to the 1980s in the 20th century, initially in *Porto Alegre* (RS), in 1979, and later in 1983, with the creation of a service of the Holy House of Mercy<sup>2</sup> in the city of *São Paulo* (SP).

However, it was only in 1997 that the first institution to discuss and represent the aspirations of professionals with in-

terests in palliative care was created, the *Associação Brasileira de Cuidados Paliativos* (ABCP), which strengthened and encouraged the development of research in the field of thematic and with a multiprofessional character.<sup>2,14</sup>

The fact that the first services have appeared in São Paulo and the creation of ABCP in that state of the federation may justify the largest number of researches on the subject at the *Universidade de São Paulo*, together with the creation in 1994 of the first Research in Palliative Care, also linked to this university and called "Pain, symptom control and palliative care".<sup>14</sup>

It is worth mentioning that, despite the first isolated initiatives that took place in the 1980s and the creation of the ABCP in 1997, which has not been shown to be active, it is observed that in fact only from 2005, with the creation of the *Brazilian Academia Nacional de Cuidados Paliativos* (ANCP), it was possible to observe an increase in the interest of professionals in studying the subject. With this new organization, congresses now happen every two years, which has contributed to discussions and interactions between researchers from Brazil and the world. In 2016, the 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Palliative Care was held in *Bento Gonçalves* (RS), in partnership with the Portuguese Association of Palliative Care (APCP), which promoted the III Lusophone Congress of Palliative Care.

Associated with this historical fact, it is possible to observe that since 2006 there has been an increase in publications on the subject, which may be related to the dissemination movement promoted by the academy which, despite being an organization founded by physicians and having only this professional in his board, accepts others as associates.

It is important to emphasize that palliative care in Brazil is still relatively recent and, in the case of a continental country, its expansion at the national level becomes a challenge. However, it is noticeable that discussions and training of palliative care teams have increased and, in parallel, the interest of professionals in specializing, becoming multipliers,<sup>17</sup> although there is a gap in specialized training.

In the methodological approach of the studies analyzed, there is predominance of the qualitative type. Publications with a quantitative approach are still very incipient, perhaps until the time the practice became more widespread in Brazil. Hopefully, we shall have new cohort studies and investigations that seek to prove scientific evidence of palliative care practices.

This situation is confirmed in another study that characterized the production of the Brazilian postgraduate courses in the nursing area and recognizes that there is predominance in the use of the qualitative approach in detriment of the quantitative one.<sup>18</sup>

One study<sup>19</sup> which sought to analyze the training of nursing doctors in Brazil results in the predominance in the use of the qualitative approach in theses and, less frequently, the use

of the qualitative-quantitative approach. And possibly these findings are parallel with the small provision of curricular components that discuss in depth the science of Nursing and the use of the quantitative approach for the development of experimental research, especially clinical trials, considered capable of producing robust evidence.

Regarding the type of study, there was prevalence in the use of the content analysis technique as a methodological resource for data systematization. It is a method defined as a set of techniques used to analyze communications, with the aim of allowing inferences. It uses the conditions in which the data was produced, considering the variables investigated. Among the different nuances of the content analysis presented in the qualitative investigations, it is important to highlight its relation between the research question and the technique selection as a proposed method for reaching the results. Despite its limitations, as in any other method, this enables to study social phenomena as well as their interactions.<sup>20</sup>

It is perceived that there is an urgent need to direct efforts for research that go beyond the analysis of communications from perceptions and knowledge, but which provide evidence that supports the practice in the context of palliative care. There is also an urgent need to study primary health care as a scenario, since it was possible to show a still incipient number of dissertations that emphasized this scenario, three studies at the *Universidade de São Paulo*, two at the *Universidade Federal de São João del Rey* and one at the *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte*.

As the experience of the process of dying, death and mourning is a very deep one for both patients and relatives, it is observed that many studies have used phenomenology, being that of those analyzed and who used such a method, four were directed to patient experiences; three of the family members, and most of them with the nursing professionals and palliative care team about their experience in providing care.

Based on the concept analysis method, according to Rodgers, the concept of "palliative care" was analyzed in the Nursing, Medicine, Psychology and Bioethics literature, which has made a relevant contribution to the scenario of palliative care in Brazil.<sup>21</sup>

The cross-sectional studies were remarkable and it is worth highlighting those of translation, cultural adaptation and initial validation of the Results Scale for Brazil (POS-Br);<sup>22</sup> semantic validation of Pain Quality Cards words in hospitalized children;<sup>23</sup> a study on the quality of life and the fatigue of people in palliative care;<sup>24</sup> and, finally, one that evaluated the psychometric properties of the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer Quality of Life Questionnaire Core 15 PAL (EORTC-QLQ-C15-PAL) on the quality of life of cancer patients.<sup>25</sup>

These studies aim to subsidize the nurse's care practice in the patient's evaluation process when planning care, even

though the cross-sectional studies in this scenario of nurses' research are poorly explored and timid.<sup>19</sup>

Considering family care, it was possible to observe the use of the Calgary Family Assessment model in the development of a case study, with the purpose of analyzing families in the structural, developmental and functional aspects.<sup>26</sup>

There is shortage of systematic reviews that evidence the practice, considering the centrality in the production of knowledge related to subjective issues and not in the generation of strong evidence that allows analysis and explanation on the care process. A study that analyzed the training of doctors in Nursing in Brazil reveals the need for research with approaches to systematic investigations based on explanations, compatible methodologies and supports of theories that support the models and care processes.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the population of the studies, prevalence of nurses (26.05%), followed by patients (23.53%) and relatives (15.13%), was observed. A similar study carried out in Portugal shows similar evidences, indicating the prevalence of health professionals, patients and family members as the target population of the studies in that country, justified by more accessibility to the participants and even by the difficulty in researching patients in end-of-life care, due to vulnerability to death.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that, in the Brazilian reality, to have the nurses as the largest number of participants is also due to the proximity of the researchers in the accomplishment of the data collection. Nevertheless, we insist on the importance of thinking about the expansion of the scenario of participants and allying new research to the field of care practices and the results that professional care implies in the quality of life and dignity of the person in palliative care and his family, including in the process of mourning.

## CONCLUSION

It was possible to observe that the number of publications about the subject studied has increased over the years, which has favored the dissemination of Nursing care knowledge and practices in the interdisciplinary scenario of palliative care.

In the theses and dissertations analyzed, there is a marked predominance of qualitative studies, and little has been the emphasis on studies that provide strong evidence, such as studies of systematic reviews that aim to strengthen evidence-based nursing. It is important to draw attention to the incipient number of studies that investigate and discuss the role of nurses in palliative care in primary health care.

During the research, it was also observed that some publications are deficient in describing the method and design of the study, which sometimes made it difficult to classify them. As a limiting factor of the study, it is cited the outdatedness of some institutional repositories of dissertations and theses.

Finally, this research allowed to characterize the production of the postgraduate course *stricto sensu* in the area of nursing, and the findings helped to obtain a panorama about the research on palliative care by nurses. In addition, the contribution of this study is the indication of the need for more research to be developed based on the use of more robust approaches and research methods with a greater degree of innovation, given the relevance and timeliness of the subject and the need to improve the practices of care of the person in the process of termination in search of a good death.

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