

HISTORICAL RESEARCH ARTICLE (ORIGINAL)

Nursing records in Portuguese journals (1958-1998): A bibliometric study

Os registos de enfermagem nas revistas portuguesas (1958-1998): Um estudo bibliométrico

Los registros de enfermería en las revistas portuguesas (1958-1998): Un estudio bibliométrico

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Abstract

Background: The changes observed in nursing documentation prompted a historical study on the evolution of nursing records between 1958, when the Ministry of Health and Assistance was created, and 1998, when the *Ordem dos Enfermeiros* (Portuguese Nursing and Midwifery Regulator) was established. Thus, the analysis of publications on nursing records in Portuguese journals during this period was considered relevant.

Objective: To identify and analyze the scientific production on nursing records published in Portuguese nursing journals between 1958 and 1998.

Methodology: A bibliometric study was conducted by consulting 504 Portuguese nursing journals published between 1958 and 1998, using descriptors and inclusion criteria.

Results: A final sample of 22 articles related to different aspects of nursing records was obtained.

Conclusion: Nursing records have been a publication subject in Portuguese journals since 1984. The number of publications increased as changes occurred in the nursing profession. Nursing records have accompanied the nursing career's professional reconfiguration and are essential for the profession's autonomy.

Keywords: records; nursing records; periodicals; documentation; nursing process

Resumo

Contexto: As alterações verificadas na documentação em enfermagem suscitaram a realização de um estudo histórico sobre a evolução dos registos de enfermagem, entre 1958, com a criação do Ministério da Saúde e Assistência e 1998, ano da criação da Ordem dos Enfermeiros. Neste sentido, tornou-se pertinente fazer a análise das publicações sobre registos de enfermagem, nas revistas portuguesas, no período em estudo.

Objetivo: Identificar e analisar a produção científica sobre registos de enfermagem publicada nas revistas portuguesas de enfermagem, entre 1958 e 1998.

Metodologia: Efetuou-se um estudo bibliométrico com a consulta de 504 revistas portuguesas de enfermagem publicadas entre 1958 e 1998, aplicando descritores e critérios de inclusão.

Resultados: Obteve-se uma amostra final de 22 artigos relacionados com vários aspetos dos registos de enfermagem.

Conclusão: Os registos de enfermagem foram assunto de publicação nas revistas portuguesas a partir de 1984. O número de publicações aumentou à medida que surgiram alterações na profissão de enfermagem. Os registos de enfermagem acompanharam a reconfiguração profissional e são determinantes para a autonomia da profissão.

Palavras-chave: registos; registos de enfermagem; publicações periódicas; documentação; processo de enfermagem

Resumen

Contexto: Los cambios en la documentación en enfermería motivaron un estudio histórico sobre la evolución de los registros de enfermería entre 1958, con la creación del Ministerio de Sanidad y Asistencia, y 1998, año en que se creó el Colegio de Enfermería. En este sentido, se consideró importante analizar las publicaciones sobre los registros de enfermería en las revistas portuguesas durante el período de estudio.

Objetivo: Identificar y analizar la producción científica sobre registros de enfermería publicada en revistas de enfermería portuguesas entre 1958 y 1998.

Metodología: Se realizó un estudio bibliométrico en el que se consultaron 504 revistas de enfermería portuguesas publicadas entre 1958 y 1998, para lo cual se aplicaron descriptores y criterios de inclusión.

Resultados: Se obtuvo una muestra final de 22 artículos relacionados con diversos aspectos de los registros de enfermería.

Conclusión: Los registros de enfermería fueron objeto de publicación en revistas portuguesas a partir de 1984. El número de publicaciones aumentó a medida que surgieron cambios en la profesión de enfermería. Los registros de enfermería han acompañado la reconfiguración profesional y son esenciales para la autonomía de la profesión.

Palabras clave: registros; registros de enfermería; publicaciones periódicas; documentación; proceso de enfermería

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Introduction

Nursing records have been a subject of reflection due to their key role in nurses' professional performance.

Nursing records, considered an autonomous nursing activity, are "narratives of relevant events written by nurses in appropriate forms and result from the delivery of nursing care" (Silva, 1995, p. 17). Nursing notes are a part of nursing records and use informal handwritten language to describe facts regarding care delivery (Silva, 1995).

Documenting nursing care promotes care continuity, produces care delivery documentation, enables the assessment of care delivery, facilitates research, and optimizes care delivery management. It is also a means to make professional nursing practice visible outside the professional group by producing indicators based on the information documented (Silva, 2006).

In the mid-19th century, at the beginning of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale attributed great importance to nursing records and considered them essential for care delivery. Nightingale described the need to keep clear and accurate records on heating and ventilation, lighting, sanitary conditions and hygiene, noise, and the selection and provision of an adequate diet. The purpose of the data collected was to improve care delivery management in the areas considered deficient (Nightingale, 1860).

In the 1960s, with the Holistic Theory, nurses recorded all steps of their clinical reasoning: initial assessment, identification of problems, definition of expected outcomes, planning of nursing interventions, care delivery, and evaluation of the effectiveness/efficiency of the care delivered (Silva, 1995).

During this period, nursing documentation was not filed with the patients' medical records and was discarded after discharge.

Nursing documentation only became essential in the 1970s, reflecting the changes in the nursing profession. During the 1970s, nursing records were thoroughly kept. In the 1980s, they had little to do with nursing interventions, and during the 1990s, they started to be client-related (Dias et al., 2001).

Emerging in the United States of America during the 1950s, the nursing process became an integral part of nursing care delivery, applying a systematic clinical reasoning methodology (Silva, 1995). Nursing records are key to documenting all the steps of the nursing process and the use of a standardized language is essential for their application.

Their correct implementation allows nurses to improve the care process management and avoid record duplication (Silva et al., 2019).

Nurses felt the need to create a common language to organize, standardize, quantify, and promote the effectiveness of their practices. Therefore, traditional paper-based systems gave way to Nursing Information Systems (NIS), following the new information technologies that allowed managing all the information produced (Cunha et al., 2019). The contribution of nursing research in this area facilitated the transition from traditional models of nursing records to NIS based on new structures and incorporating

a standardized language. Healthcare organizations have kept up with the new standards of demand to meet the current challenges, creating new information systems.

NIS are a reality in healthcare institutions, so it was relevant to conduct a historical study to understand nurses' records in hospital settings before NIS implementation. This study analyses the period between 1958, when the Ministry of Health and Assistance was created, and 1998, when the *Ordem dos Enfermeiros* ([OE] Portuguese Nursing and Midwifery Regulator) was established. The interest in nurses' problems regarding their training and professional practice emerged after the creation of the Ministry of Health and Assistance, resulting in the revision of nursing education, the creation and expansion of nursing schools, and the structuring of nursing careers. The establishment of the OE was also essential for the nursing profession because it allowed its self-regulation. All knowledge has its historical dimension, and the more systematic the research is, the safer and more coherent its interpretation will be.

To extend this research, it became relevant to examine the publications about nursing records in Portuguese journals during the selected period.

This study was based on journals because the production of professional nursing content and its regular publication in technical journals contribute to disseminating and developing technical and scientific knowledge (Machado, 2014). Considering Portuguese nursing journals as a means of knowledge dissemination at the time under study, the analysis of the publications on nursing records allowed identifying the aspects represented and analyzing the knowledge transmitted. This study did not include publications in newspapers, lecture notes, and books.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the production of professional nursing content in Portugal was based on the translation of foreign books and articles published in nursing journals and other technical journals, thus disseminating the technical and scientific knowledge developed internationally. This aspect contributed to the development of professional nursing content, and the regular publication of technical and professional journals gained more significance and expression. From the 1990s onwards, this fact became more evident due to the actions that contributed to the professional development and growth of nursing (Machado, 2014).

Hence, the following research question was formulated: What was published about nursing records in Portuguese nursing journals between 1958 and 1998?

To answer the research question, the following objectives were established: to identify the Portuguese nursing journals existing between 1958 and 1998, to identify those that published contents on nursing records, to identify the number of publications, the authors' category, the contents addressed, and in which contexts they were produced.

Methodology

The methodology selected for this study was the bibliometric analysis, which allows mapping the scientific know-



ledge in a research area, highlighting the connections between the main publications, authors, institutions, themes, and other characteristics of the area studied (Oliveira et al., 2019).

The study had as inclusion criteria that the consulted journals had to be published in Portugal between 1958 and 1998, and the analyzed articles had to contain the words “records,” “nursing records,” or “documentation” in their title, or other terms related to the documentation of nursing care, such as aspects concerning the application of the nursing process. The articles’ authors could be national or foreign.

A survey of the Portuguese nursing journals published between 1958 and 1998 was conducted based on Machado’s study (2014) on the dissemination of knowledge in nursing periodicals during the 20th and early 21st centuries. Then, the bibliographic catalogs of the libraries of the Nursing School of Lisbon and the *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* nursing centre were examined to identify the journals available for consultation. A sample of 504 journals was obtained according to Table 1. The publishing entities of these journals are professional associations, professional organizations, nursing schools, hospital institutions, and other publishing entities.

Table 1

The journals consulted, their publication date, and publishing entity

Journal	Publishing entity	Publication date	Consulted issues
<i>Servir</i>	Catholic Association of Nursing and Health Professionals	1960-1998	210
<i>Enfermagem</i>	Portuguese Nurses Association	1985-1996	27
	The Portuguese Operating Room Nurses Association		
<i>Divulgação</i>	Francisco Gentil Portuguese Institute of Oncology	1987-1996	12
<i>Ecos de Enfermagem</i>	North Nurses Syndicate	1988-1998	50
<i>Nursing</i> (edição portuguesa)	Ferreira and Bento	1988-1998	120
<i>Enfermagem em Foco</i>	Portuguese Nurses Syndicate	1991-1998	34
<i>Nephro’s</i>	Portuguese Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association	1993-1994	4
<i>Sinais Vitais</i>	Formasau, Training and Health Limited	1994-1998	21
<i>Enfermagem Oncológica</i>	Portuguese Oncological Nursing Society	1996-1998	5
<i>Informar</i>	Nursing School Imaculada Conceição	1995-1998	13
<i>Revista Portuguesa de Enfermagem</i>	Nursing Training Institute	1996	2
<i>Pensar Enfermagem</i>	Nursing School Maria Fernanda Resende	1997-1998	4
<i>Referência</i>	Nursing School Dr. Ângelo da Fonseca	1998	2

The journals were consulted *in loco* at the libraries of the Nursing School of Lisbon and the *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* between May and June 2019. Although the journal *Servir* began its publication in 1952, the only issues available for consultation dated from 1960 onwards (Machado, 2014).

At first, each journal’s index was analyzed by reading the published articles’ titles and identifying those fitting the inclusion criteria. Next, a full reading of the selected articles and the bibliometric analysis of the publications were carried out.

Results and discussion

Thirty-four articles were initially identified. However, after applying the inclusion criteria, only 22 articles published between 1958 and 1998 were selected.

The first selected article was published in the journal *Servir*

in 1984, the second 3 years later, in 1987. Between 1989 and 1998, publications appeared every year, scattered among several journals. The largest number of articles were published in 1997 and 1998, as shown in Table 2. The journal *Servir* has the largest number of publications (eight), followed by *Nursing*, *Enfermagem*, and *Enfermagem em Foco*, with three publications. The journals *Divulgação*, *Informar*, *Enfermagem Oncológica*, *Sinais Vitais*, and *Referência* published one article each. The journals *Ecos de Enfermagem*, *Nephro’s*, *Revista de Enfermagem Portuguesa* and *Pensar Enfermagem* did not publish any article on nursing records during the selected period.

Three articles are translations of foreign authors related to nursing records in patient triage, operating room, and nursing process application. The remaining authors are Portuguese nurses working in management, clinical practice, and nursing education, scattered across the nation. This study found that each author published an average of one article on the topic, except for two authors who

published twice. Four of the published articles resulted from research studies in hospital services within the scope of nursing records. Two articles emerged from studies conducted within the scope of the master's degree in Nursing Sciences, and one was carried out under the

framework of a specialization course in Medical-Surgical Nursing. One of the articles was developed to guide nursing students in using nursing records during clinical teachings. The remaining publications are reflection and opinion papers.

Table 2

Selected articles

Article Title	Authors	Year	Journal
Records as evaluation tools for Nursing benefits	Romano, Alfredo N.; Silva, João F.	1984	<i>Servir</i>
Records	Carmo, Dulce	1987	<i>Servir</i>
Triage documentation	Blythin, Peter	1989	<i>Nursing</i>
Nursing records in the operating room	Pudner, Marianne; Hutchings, Berverly	1989	<i>Nursing</i>
The Nursing Process - what it is and how to apply it	Simeão, Maria J.	1990	<i>Servir</i>
The Nursing records in the operating room	Pinheiro, Maria J.	1991	<i>Nursing</i>
Reflection on the importance of written communication in Nursing	Pereira, Isabel C.	1992	<i>Servir</i>
Nursing records	Rodeia, João	1993	<i>Servir</i>
Good care delivery, without records?	Bruges, Maria L.; Bettencourt, Merícia; Delgado, Rosalina	1994	<i>Servir</i>
Manifestation of independent and interdependent care interventions in Nursing	Ferraz, Isabel	1995	<i>Servir</i>
Nursing records...possible influence of a theoretical Nursing model in developing evolution notes	Marques, Deolinda et al.	1996	<i>Enfermagem</i>
Nursing practice records	Ramalhão, Maria A.	1996	<i>Divulgação</i>
Nursing records in an emergency service: a brief reflection	Murcho, Nuno	1997	<i>Enfermagem em Foco</i>
Learning how to register is urgent	Xavier, Sandra	1997	<i>Enfermagem em Foco</i>
A reflection on Nursing records incompatibility and the corrector	Correia, Maria A.	1997	<i>Enfermagem em Foco</i>
Nursing records	Figueiredo, Ana; Figueiredo, Pedro	1997	<i>Enfermagem Oncológica</i>
The objectivity and subjectivity of Nursing records	Pinho, Fátima	1997	<i>Informar</i>
Computerized nursing process	Úria, Manuel; Lopes, Sara	1997	<i>Servir</i>
Nursing process 5 - endless paperwork	Nancy, Roper; Logan, Win; Tierney, Alison	1998	<i>Enfermagem</i>
Records management using the nursing process - experience in a medical service	Gomes, Sérgio	1998	<i>Enfermagem</i>
Guidelines on nursing records	Albuquerque, Ana; Delgado, Rosalina	1998	<i>Referência</i>
The importance of the nursing process in communication	Caseiro, Helena; Fortunato, Zélia	1998	<i>Sinais Vitais</i>

The authors have several points of interest and reflect on relevant aspects of nursing records during the period under study. The knowledge emerging from these publications focuses on the definition of records, their importance

and purpose, their types, and the guidelines for their implementation. They describe the role of records in implementing the nursing process, scientific research, and nursing care safety, individualization, and evaluation.

They also mention the computerization of records, the ethical and legal aspects, and the contribution of records to the nursing profession's autonomy.

According to Rodeia (1993), Ramalhão (1996), and Pinho (1997), nursing records are a means of written communication that allows the transmission of information among the healthcare team, constitute documentary evidence of the care delivered to the client, and are written evidence of decision-making.

When considering their purpose, the authors mention that nursing records facilitate communication and allow to understand the evolution of the client's status, plan nursing care, ensure its individualization and continuity, assess intervention effectiveness, verify the compliance with medical prescriptions, provide safety through the standardization of care, safeguard the nurse's responsibility, collect statistical data, and contribute to scientific research, in-service training, and management of human and material resources (Romano & Silva, 1984; Rodeia, 1993; Ramalhão, 1996; Albuquerque & Delgado, 1998; Gomes, 1998).

Regarding record typology, the authors considered important that nurses knew all the institution's regulations on record-keeping to make accurate, concise, and legible records (Rodeia, 1993; Ramalhão, 1996). Moreover, records should follow the hospital policy created for the purpose, be based on sound knowledge, and be context-specific (Murcho, 1997).

The suggestion to include nursing records in the rest of the patient's medical record was made in the first publication selected, considering that part of the records was not used, and a set of key information to assess the care delivered was discarded (Romano & Silva, 1984).

In the 1990s, authors noted the importance of existing a conceptual model that guided record-keeping and the practical application of the nursing process. Silva (2006) mentions that the reflection on critical thinking as a strategy for developing nursing practices began at the beginning of this decade in connection with the nursing process. According to Marques et al. (1996), nursing records should reflect the mental scheme of the nursing process and are essential for its implementation. The documentation of its different steps, from assessment to evaluation, allows for the individualization of care delivery, the establishment of priorities, and the accurate transmission of information to ensure the continuity of care, thus increasing its humanization. The scientific language used allows for the standardization of the actions developed (Simeão, 1990).

In the 1990s, the computerization of nursing records also began with the implementation of the computerized nursing process. The authors suggested the creation of a record system that allowed for a quick and efficient recording and ensured a concise, complete, and quick transmission of the recorded information (Murcho, 1997). In this context, a highlight should be given to the importance of Silva's (1995, 2006) studies in NIS, which should meet the nurses' information and documentation needs. Some authors justified the lack of publications between 1958 and 1984 with the low value attributed to nursing records (Rodeia, 1993).

This study observed that nursing records became a publication subject in Portuguese nursing journals only after the 1980s, gaining greater importance during the 1990s. Although this decade is considered the period during which periodical publications gained more significance and expression (Machado, 2014), the growing importance of nursing records occurred during a time of major changes for the nursing profession.

In 1981, the nursing career underwent alterations to improve care delivery, human resources management, and nurses' prospects of professional accomplishment and progression. Following these changes, nurses were expected to assess nursing care needs and plan, execute, and evaluate results when delivering care. The carrying out of these steps attributed importance to nursing records. The career path published in 1981 underwent minor changes in 1983 and 1985.

The integration of nursing education into the national education system at the polytechnic higher education level occurred in 1988. Nursing schools were responsible for providing the appropriate scientific and technical training for general nursing care delivery and more complex care delivery in specialized higher education studies. Within the scope of nursing education, some publications on nursing records were found highlighting their role in this context. According to Cunha et al. (2010), the higher the professional category and the nurses' postgraduate training, the easier it is to implement a record system.

In 1991, a new reformulation of the nursing career occurred, including, for the first time, nursing records as an activity inherent to nursing care, a fact also mentioned by some authors (Bruges et al., 1994).

The Regulation of Nursing Practice (REPE - Regulamento do Exercício Profissional dos Enfermeiros), published in 1996, aimed to clarify concepts, characterize nursing care, and specify nurses' competencies, defining their responsibilities, rights, and duties. Nursing care is described as the autonomous or interdependent interventions performed by nurses within their practice. Nursing records are considered as means to evaluate nursing interventions.

In 1998, the creation of the OE promoted the regulation and discipline of nurses' practice, ensuring compliance with ethical standards and the dignity of nursing practice. These events contributed to nurses' autonomy, with the systematic recording of all nursing interventions constituting a path towards the profession's affirmation because the visibility of nurses' professional practice is only achieved through the production of indicators resulting from the information documented (Silva, 2006).

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, publications on nursing records have emerged, addressing aspects related to their importance, typology, and role in implementing the nursing process, scientific research, nursing care safety, and electronic records.

Nursing records accompanied the nursing career's professional reconfiguration. This study observed that with the

changes in the profession, the publications in this area also increased, promoting the importance of nursing records. Following the nursing career reformulation in 1991, the publication of the REPE in 1996, and the creation of the OE in 1998, a greater number of publications occurred. Autonomy plays a key role in nurses' professional performance and nursing records, as an autonomous activity, are essential for the profession's affirmation. The topics addressed demonstrate the reality of nursing records at the time of their publication, allowing the understanding of their contexts. Thus, they contribute to the path of nursing records up to the implementation of NIS models.

Authors contributions

Conceptualization: Sousa, M. H.

Data curation: Sousa, M. H., Figueiredo, A. S.

Methodology: Sousa, M. H., Figueiredo, A. S.

Writing – original draft: Sousa, M. H.

Writing – review & editing: Sousa, M. H., Figueiredo, A. S.

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