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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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COPING CONDITIONS FOR COVID-19 IN POPULATIONS DEPRIVED OF FREEDOM

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze scientific publications on online data platforms about the Covid-19 in the population deprived of freedom. This is an integrative review of qualitative approach, where articles were searched in online databases Scielo, Pubmed and Lilacs, using the descriptors Covid-19, Prisons/Prisons, Nursing and Brazil. Thirteen studies were analyzed, from which it was discussed how to face the pandemic in the prison system, reflecting on the attributions of nursing in this scenario. It was observed that measures such as decarceration, restriction of visits and health education were some of the interventions adopted in these environments, with ample possibility of action of the nursing team in these places. We conclude that the pandemic in the prison system is a public health challenge and that there is a lack of scientific evidence involving the population deprived of freedom, requiring greater efforts of the scientific community focused on this population.

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INTRODUCTION

Initially identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, SARS-COV-2, is characterized as a virus of high transmissibility and pathogenicity, which triggered Covid-19. Spreading rapidly on a global scale, it was classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (BRASIL, 2020b). Given this new scenario, the whole world mobilized to take measures that would provide support in the face of this new unknown, given the uncontrolled increase in infections in several countries. Covid-19 is a disease that causes respiratory manifestations, where the absence of a specific treatment or defined cure has caused the death of thousands of victims globally. Among the various measures taken to prevent its spread, since its transmission occurs by respiratory droplets and interpersonal contact, social isolation was considered the main method of prevention, and it

is recommended that crowds be avoided, a scenario that is unfeasible in the context of prisons (AMON, 2020). According to the National Survey of Penitentiary Information (INFOPEN, 2017), in the year 2019, Brazil had around 773,151 people deprived of liberty (PDL) (BRASIL, 2020a), in conditions that favor the spread of Covid-19. As monitored by the National Council of Justice, by June sixteen, a total of 496 deaths by Covid-19 in PDL were accounted for on Brazilian territory (BRASIL, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic arrived in Brazil in a period of fragility in the national public health, triggering in prisons a series of problems that further threatened the health of PDL, since the measures for prevention and control of the disease become even more challenging in this scenario. Added to this, factors such as overcrowding in cells, the presence of the elderly and individuals with comorbidities make this group even more susceptible to getting sick, requiring the development of measures that cover this group (SANCHEZ, et. al, 2020). Among the various professionals working

in this context, nursing is characterized as a protagonist, acting directly and indirectly in the fight against the pandemic at all levels of health care (RABÊLO ALVES and BONFIM FERREIRA, 2020). Thus, the following question was formulated: What is the scientific evidence on the actions and intervention strategies to prevent and combat Covid-19 for the population deprived of freedom? Thus, the objective was to discuss scientific publications in online data platforms about the Covid-19 infection in the prison population, as well as the interventions and countermeasures to fight the disease.

METHODS

This study is an integrative literature review, with a qualitative approach. According to Mendes, Silveira and Galvão (2008), the development of the integrative review occurs through six steps: 1) identification of the theme, hypothesis and problem to be studied, 2) determination of the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the research, 3) definition of the information to be extracted from the studies, 4) bibliographic analysis of the studies included, 5) interpretation of results, 6) synthesis and presentation of the results established. The starting question was "what is the scientific evidence on the actions and strategies of interventions to prevent the onset of Covid-19 for the population deprived of freedom?" and the PICO strategy was used (P- population: prisoners; I- intervention: actions to combat and/or control Covid-19; C- comparison: strategies at the national and international level; O- results: interventions carried out).

Sciences (DeCS) and *Medical Subject Headings* (MeSh), were used, aiming to ensure a broader search. The inclusion criteria were: studies and materials published in electronic libraries in the last year, available in full, free of charge, published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, which highlight or address the interventions to address the Covid-19 in the prison system. Exclusion criteria were established as repetition of articles in these electronic databases, bibliographic and/or integrative reviews, and studies that did not respond to the problematic of this research. Through investigation and active searches in the platforms, 13 studies were selected and evaluated, and a flowchart was prepared (Figure 1), where the entire design is presented, from the identification to the inclusion of the publications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed that five articles were of national authorship while the others were international. Regarding the language of publication, three (23%) were published in Portuguese, nine (69%) in English, and one (8%) in Spanish. The selection process of the scientific reference included studies with less complex methods due to the scarcity of complete studies covering the Covid-19 in the prison axis, justified by being a current theme, being described in chart 1. After analysis, two thematic categories emerged, described below.

Confronting the Pandemic in the Penitentiary System: It is noticeable that the Brazilian penitentiary system presents weaknesses regarding its structure and staffing, where such disorders are

Table 1. Sample characterization of the publications included in the review according to study, title, authors, type of study, journal and year of publication. Fortaleza-CE, 2021

Study	Title	Authors	Type Study	Journal	Publication Year
A1	<i>COVID 19 - Recomendaciones para Establecimientos Penitenciarios.</i>	Ministry of Health	Manual	<i>Ministerio de Salud de la Nación</i>	2020
A2	<i>Characteristics and comparative Clinical outcomes of prisoner versus non-prisoner populations hospitalized with COVID-19</i>	Altibi AM; <i>et al.</i>	Observational study	Sci Rep	2021
A3	<i>The COVID-19 Epidemic and the Prison System in Italy</i>	Cingolani, <i>et al.</i>	Informative Note	<i>Journal of Correctional Health Care</i>	2020
A4	<i>New Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2): advanced of latten the curve in the prison population</i>	Matos, MA.	Letter	Journal of the Brazilian Society of Tropical Medicine	2020
A5	<i>Brazilian Justice response to protect the prison population from Covid-19</i>	Sousa, CDF.	Letter to the Editor	Journal of the Brazilian Medical Association	2020
A6	Coping strategies for COVID-19 in prison: an experience report	Benetti, SAW; <i>et al.</i>	Experience Report	Brazilian Journal of Occupational Health	2021
A7	<i>Philippine prisons and 'extreme vulnerability' during COVID-19</i>	Kahambing, JG.	Correspondence	<i>Journal of Public Health</i>	2021
A8	<i>Prevention and Control of COVID-19 in Italian Prisons: Stringent Measures and Unintended Consequences</i>	Tavoschi, Lara; <i>et al.</i>	Opinion Article	<i>Front Public Health</i>	2020
A9	<i>Zero confirmed cases: The way we curb COVID-19 in Taiwanese prisons</i>	Goh KK, Lu ML, Jou S	Report	<i>J Glob Health</i>	2020
A10	<i>COVID-19: digital equivalence of healthcare in English prisons</i>	Edge, <i>et al.</i>	Comment	<i>Lancet Digit Health</i>	2020
A11	<i>Setting up a COVID-19 care facility at a prison: An experience from Pakistan</i>	Ayyaz, Mahmood <i>et al.</i>	Perspective	<i>Annals of medicine and surgery</i>	2020
A12	Informative Note No. 05 / 2020- GST/DVAST/SVS/SES: Recommendations for Managers and Professionals of Public Security to Confront the Coronavirus Pandemic-COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2 Infection)	Ministry of Health	Informative Note	Online	2020
A13	New Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Guidelines and Guidance for Outbreaks in Correctional Facilities	Ministry of Health	COSSEMS - SP Guideline	Online	2020

Source: Author's own

The selection of the bibliographical reference took place from May to June 2021. The online data platforms *Scientific-Electronic Library Online* (SCIELO), *National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health* (PubMed), Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS) were consulted to support this review. Initially, the descriptors Covid-19 and Prisons/Prisons and later the descriptors Covid-19 and Prisons/Prisons and *Nursing*, and Covid 19 and Prisons and Brazil, available in the Descriptors in Health

characterized as sources of risk to the health of the population deprived of freedom. Elements such as precariousness in health services, presence of individuals with comorbidities and/or users of illicit drugs, followed by crowded cells, environmental unhealthiness and ventilation inefficiency, contribute to prisons becoming an environment conducive to the dissemination of Covid-19 (MATOS, 2020). However, regarding the overcrowding of cells, studies A2, A7 and A8 show that several countries share this same problem, such as

the United States, which in 2016 had more than two million inmates, Italy, which has the third largest prison occupation in Europe, and the Philippines, which has one of the highest prison densities in the world (ALTIBI, 2020; TAVOSCHI, 2020; KAHAMBING, 2021). Study A2, shows us that mortality is higher in the prison population when compared to the general population (29.6% vs. 20.1%), thus demonstrating how vulnerable this class is. (ALTIBI et. Al 2020).

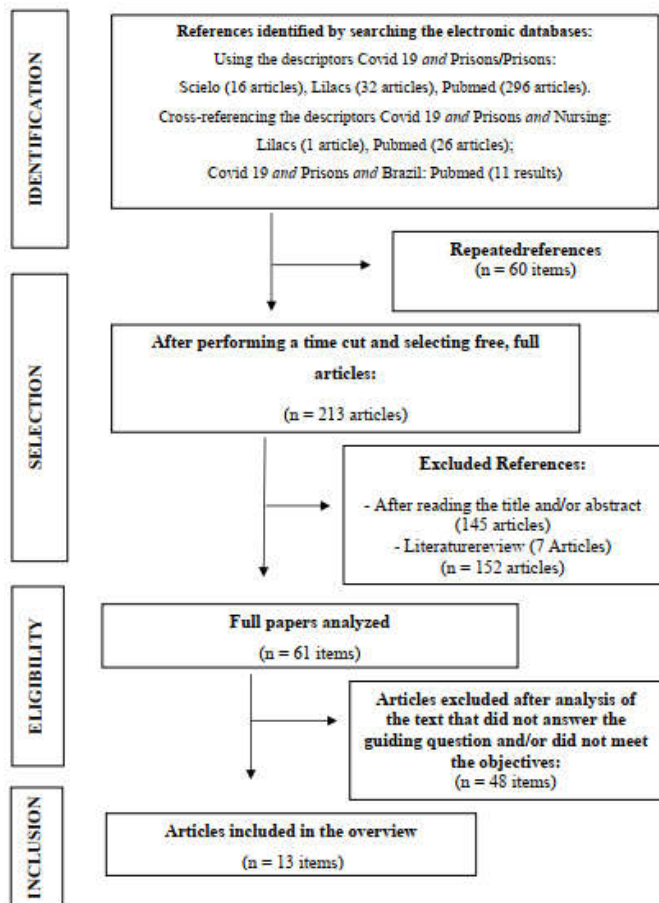


Figure 1. Flowchart of the research process for the elaboration of the study Fortaleza-CE, 2021

Study A6 also portrays that circumstances such as visits through inmates' lawyers, the transfer process and cross-infection among professionals are configured as the main potential episodes of contamination to PDL (BENETTI et. al., 2021). In this sense, the prison is a favorable scenario for the outbreak of the disease, where the investment and adherence of control tactics, developed early and agilely, reconfigure the vulnerable situation of prisons in times of pandemic. Social distancing is configured as the most effective means of prevention against the transmission of the disease, however, such action becomes unfeasible because of the reality in which the prison system is. In this view, as a form of solution, several countries have adhered to the process of decarceration of the prison population. (TAVOSCHI et al, 2020; SOUZA, 2020). In Italy, contact with the outside world has been suspended, only by telephone or videoconference. A syndromic follow-up screening was also elaborated at the entrance of individuals into the prison, whether detainees or professionals, in addition to the testing of suspected cases of the disease, isolating them from the others (CINGOLANI et al, 2020; TAVOSCHI et al, 2020). The Ministry of Health of Argentina (A1) suggested humanitarian and indiscriminate measures, such as promoting communication channels with family members and conducting campaigns and training about combat measures and characteristics of the disease (ARGENTINA, 2020). Study A9 shows that in Taiwan there was the adoption of proactive and well implemented measures through joint planning and central command with the Central Epidemic Command Center, which enabled direct communication between managers, ensuring continuous monitoring

and active participation of detainees (GOH, et al, 2020). In Pakistan, a treatment unit for patients with Covid was installed, and in England, technology became an ally in health care (AYYAZ, 2020; EDGE et al, 2020). When dealing with the confrontation of the coronavirus in the Brazilian penitentiary system, it was observed that strategies analogous to those used in prisons around the world were followed, such as the suspension of visits and the provision of sanitization of the cells and the use of masks by the inmates and professionals who work in these sectors, as well as the preparation of Guidelines and informative standards for restructuring these places (BRASIL, 2020c; BRASIL, 2020d). Measures such as health promotion, active search for suspect or suggestive cases, vaccine updates for interns and employees, preparation of organizational schedules of rotating schedules for routine activities, personnel management, provision of personal and collective protection equipment, and biosafety measures are examples of some of the actions recommended in the national territory (BRASIL, 2020c; BRASIL, 2020d).

Reflecting on the Functions of Nursing in the Penitentiary Setting in Times of Covid: Nursing is configured as a profession that is committed to the quality of life of the user, acting in the promotion, prevention and rehabilitation of health in the divergent sociocultural context in which the client is inserted (COFEN, 2017). From this perspective, when observing the strategies used in prisons, the nursing team is of great relevance in the effectiveness of care and in ensuring a broader assistance. In this scenario, nursing can be attributed to the triage management and follow-up of symptomatic cases or cases suggestive of influenza symptoms, providing assistance in patient treatment units. Thus, it is reflected, in discussion to articles A5 and A11, regarding preventive interventions and health education, mass testing and vaccination, the figure of the nurse is seen as indispensable (BRASIL, 2020; CINGOLANI et al, 2020; AYYAZ et al, 2020). In addition, in article A6, it was evidenced that with the multidisciplinary team, the nurse acts in the organizational sphere, and in the debates of preparation, planning and control of health actions (BENETTI, et al, 2020). Thus, the nursing team has sufficient technical and scientific skills and competences to act at any level of health, being no different in prisons, being these professionals primordial in structuring and active contribution in facing the disease. However, Lima et, al (2020), portrays the fragility evidenced by the shortage of nursing professionals working in prisons, where in the period from January to June 2020 there were only 1534 nursing professionals and 2603 nursing technicians and assistants, compared to the number of inmates, there is a lack of care in the national territory. Thus, it is known that nursing is characterized as essential for the functioning of health itself, however, in what concerns the role of the nursing team in fighting the pandemic in prisons, it was observed a lack of studies portraying their attributions. However, when contemplating the strategies implemented in prisons, it is noted that nursing represents fundamental relevance in the provision of actions and the effectiveness of assistance and continuity of care.

Concluding Remarks

The fight and confrontation of Covid 19 in Brazilian penitentiary institutions, as well as around the world, are configured as a challenge to governmental administrations in the face of the uncontrolled advance of the disease. It is evident that PDL are marginalized, deprived of empathy and care, however, these individuals also suffer from the current health crisis in which we live. Thus, it is up to the nursing and local servers to promote a safe and above all humanized environment for this population. The PDL still lacks collections and productions by the scientific community with emphasis on the socio-environmental context in which this population is inserted, as well as related to Covid-19 and other diseases that affect this public, being even more restricted when it comes to the delegations and duties of the nursing professional in this axis. The inclusion of this group as a priority for immunization can contribute to prevent outbreaks in these places, protecting not only the PDL, but also the professionals working in this sector and the external community as a whole. In this sense, in the face of all the chaos that the world is going through, it is hoped that the prison population, as well as the entire vulnerable and

neglected population, will receive more attention and effort from the authorities, thus making it possible to change the course our society is on.

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