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THE IMPACT OF TELECONSULTATION ON THE QUALITY OF NURSING CARE: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

IMPACTO DA TELECONSULTA NA QUALIDADE DOS CUIDADOS DE ENFERMAGEM: UMA REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA DA LITERATURA

EL IMPACTO DE LA TELECONSULTA EN LA CALIDAD DE LOS CUIDADOS DE ENFERMERÍA: UNA REVISIÓN INTEGRATIVA DE LA LITERATURA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The nursing profession's mission is to care for people. With the development of Information and Communication Technologies, there was a need to reorganize the system and provide assistance remotely through telephone contact, proving to be an excellent accessibility strategy, facilitating access to nursing care. The telephonic nursing work process requires the establishment of an interpersonal relationship and trust in order to value nursing care.

Objective: Recognizing the impact of teleconsultation on the quality of nursing care.

Methods: An integrative literature review was conducted. The PICO mnemonic was used to formulate the research question. Descriptive data analysis with scientific articles research was conducted through the EBSCOhost electronic platform, Virtual Health Library (VHL), and Google Scholar, published between 2018 and 2023. The selected articles highlighted studies on nursing care in the postpartum period, with inclusion criteria being free articles in Portuguese and English, and exclusion criteria being all phases of a woman's life except menopause. Seven articles were selected, which highlighted the importance of teleconsultation in nursing competencies, and followed the recommendations of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses – PRISMA method.

Results: Most selected articles suggest scientific evidence of health gains when using new information and communication technologies. With this study, it was observed that the implementation of this strategy will contribute to the construction of a new nursing care based on the quality of care to meet the needs of women in the postpartum period.

Conclusion: Based on the scientific evidence obtained, the importance of nursing care in the postpartum period was observed, particularly through the ease of access achieved through new technologies, making it essential for nursing to adapt its competencies to this new paradigm. Teleconsultation is beneficial for users as it amplifies access to healthcare, promoting personalized, efficient, and quality care, having a significantly positive impact on the quality of nursing care.

Keywords: Care; Information and Communication Technologies; Nursing.

RESUMO

Introdução: A profissão de enfermagem tem como missão o cuidado à pessoa. Através do desenvolvimento das Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação houve a necessidade de reorganizar o sistema e de dar assistência de uma forma não presencial através do contacto telefónico, constatando-se uma excelente estratégia de acessibilidade, tornando facilitador o acesso a uma assistência de enfermagem. O processo de trabalho com base na assistência telefónica realizado pelo enfermeiro requer o estabelecimento de uma relação interpessoal e de confiança, de forma a valorizar a atuação dos cuidados de enfermagem.

Objetivo: Compreender o impacto da teleconsulta na qualidade dos cuidados de enfermagem.

Métodos: Realizado uma revisão integrativa da literatura. Utilizou-se a mnemónica PICO para compilar a pergunta de investigação. Análise de dados descritiva com pesquisa de artigos científicos, através da plataforma eletrónica EBSCOhost, Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS) e Google académico, publicados entre 2018 e 2023. Os artigos selecionados foram aqueles que davam destaque a estudos sobre os cuidados de enfermagem no puerpério, cujo os critérios de inclusão foram artigos gratuitos em Português e Inglês, como critérios de exclusão: todas as fases da vida da mulher, sem ser o climatério. Foram selecionados 7 artigos que revelam a importância da teleconsulta nas competências de enfermagem e seguiram-se as recomendações do método *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* – PRISMA.

Resultados: A maioria dos artigos selecionados sugerem existir evidência científica de ganhos em saúde quando utilizado as novas tecnologias de informação e comunicação. Com este estudo, observou-se que a implementação desta estratégia vai contribuir para a construção de um novo cuidado em enfermagem construído com base na qualidade da assistência para conseguir dar resposta às necessidades da mulher no puerpério.

Conclusão: Com base na evidência científica obtida, constatou-se a importância que os cuidados de enfermagem assumem no puerpério, nomeadamente através da facilidade de acesso conseguido por meio das novas tecnologias, tornando-se fundamental a enfermagem adequar as suas competências a este novo paradigma. A teleconsulta apresenta-se como algo benéfico para os utilizadores uma vez que amplifica o acesso aos cuidados de saúde, promovendo um atendimento personalizado, eficiente e com qualidade, tendo alcançado um impacto bastante positivo no âmbito da qualidade dos cuidados de enfermagem.

Palavra-chave: Cuidados; Enfermagem; Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La profesión de enfermería tiene como misión el cuidado de las personas. Con el desarrollo de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación, surgió la necesidad de reorganizar el sistema y proporcionar asistencia de forma remota a través del contacto telefónico, demostrando ser una excelente estrategia de accesibilidad que facilita el acceso a la atención de enfermería. El proceso de trabajo telefónico en enfermería requiere el establecimiento de una relación interpersonal y de confianza para valorar la atención de enfermería.

Objetivo: Comprender el impacto de la teleconsulta en la calidad de la atención de enfermería.

Métodos: Se realizó una revisión integrativa de la literatura. Se utilizó la mnemotecnica PICO para formular la pregunta de investigación. Se realizó un análisis descriptivo de datos con investigación de artículos científicos a través de la plataforma electrónica EBSCOhost, la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud (BVS) y Google Scholar, publicados entre 2018 y 2023. Los artículos seleccionados destacaron estudios sobre cuidados de enfermería en el puerperio, con criterios de inclusión que incluyeron artículos gratuitos en portugués e inglés, y criterios de exclusión que abarcaban todas las fases de la vida de la mujer excepto la menopausia. Se seleccionaron siete artículos que destacaban la importancia de la teleconsulta en las competencias de enfermería y se siguieron las recomendaciones del método Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses – PRISMA.

Resultados: La mayoría de los artículos seleccionados sugieren evidencia científica de beneficios para la salud cuando se utilizan nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. Con este estudio, se observó que la implementación de esta estrategia contribuirá a la construcción de una nueva atención de enfermería basada en la calidad de la atención para satisfacer las necesidades de las mujeres en el puerperio.

Conclusión: Basado en la evidencia científica obtenida, se observó la importancia de la atención de enfermería en el puerperio, especialmente a través de la facilidad de acceso lograda mediante nuevas tecnologías, siendo esencial que la enfermería adapte sus competencias a este nuevo paradigma. La teleconsulta es beneficiosa para los usuarios ya que amplía el acceso a la atención médica, promoviendo una atención personalizada, eficiente y de calidad, teniendo un impacto significativamente positivo en la calidad de la atención de enfermería.

Descriptores: Cuidado; Enfermería; Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación.

INTRODUCTION

The nursing profession has as its mission the care of the person in his life process⁽¹⁾. In the application of professional practice the nursing process is structured in five stages: data collection, nursing diagnosis, nursing planning, implementation of actions and evaluation of nursing, the nursing consultation as an essential tool for the provision of health care⁽²⁾.

The technological development of the last decades has contributed to a qualified assistance, especially with the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies⁽³⁾. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to reorganize the health system to provide remote assistance, avoiding physical contact^(4,5). In the perspective of improving health care, telecontact was an excellent strategy, particularly in remote regions, making easy access to nursing care through prevention and health promotion practices⁽³⁾.

Digital tools provide a digital interaction between health professionals that enhances a distance assessment, managing to define strategies and formulate hypotheses in order to understand their health context, by defining a care plan at a distance⁽⁴⁾. The work process based on telephone assistance performed by nurses requires the establishment of an interpersonal and trust relationship, in order to value the performance of nursing care⁽⁶⁾.

The nurse is an essential resource in this process, being responsible for the monitoring and development of health education strategies can be implemented through measures such as postpartum consultation where it addresses all issues related to this phase, so that the puerperal woman can clarify doubts and deal with adversities in the home environment⁽³⁾.

The use of information and communication technologies becomes a phenomenon projector of care for the qualification of nursing care, providing the construction of links, facilitating access to health, allowing the reduction of the distance between the professional and the patient, being considered a guiding strategy for nursing care in order to provide a person-centered monitoring, improving their knowledge⁽⁴⁾.

Objective

Questions about the importance of quality in nursing care are increasingly highlighted in today's society. The nursing consultation via telephone is a useful resource that comes from new information and communication technologies that allows nursing care in a non-presence way. Thus, the objective of this research is to understand the impact of teleconsultation on the quality of nursing care.

METHODOLOGY

Ethical Aspects

No application was made to the Ethics Committee since it is a secondary study. In the survey of the problem was respected the principles of transparency, precision and objectivity so that the results are evidenced as an asset for development in the health area, these principles were carried out in an objective and detailed ensuring the credibility of the integrative review. Transparency was ensured through public access to data, accuracy was ensured by careful data extraction and analysis, and objectivity was guaranteed through the statement that denies any conflict of interest and blind reviews about the role of the nurse during the postpartum period.

Data analysis was conducted with respect to the results obtained in these investigations and by all investigators. The bibliography was applied according to the standards of good academic and scientific practices. A data extraction form based on PRISMA guidelines was used to ensure consistency in the collection of information. Data extraction was performed by two independent reviewers, and the differences were overcome through discussion and dialogue from various points of view. The extracted articles were stored in an electronic reference management system accessible only to the research authors.

Type of Study

The methodology chosen for the elaboration of this work was the integrative review of the literature on the theme of the impact of teleconsultation on the quality of nursing care. This methodology allows the elaboration of the synthesis of results and a deeper understanding of the theme. Several steps recommended for this work were used. First stage: identification of the theme and selection of the hypothesis or research question for the elaboration of the integrative review; second stage: establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies/sampling or literature research; third stage: definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies/categorization of the studies; fourth stage: the evaluation of the studies included in the integrative review; fifth stage: interpretation of the results; sixth stage: presentation of the review⁽⁷⁾.

Several inclusion criteria were defined, such as: (I) quantitative and qualitative studies that reveal the effectiveness of ICT's in the puerperium; (II) population: puerperal; (III) interventions: aimed at increasing the quality of nursing care; (IV) studies published in the last 5 years (2019-2024) to ensure the relevance and timeliness of the data; (V) language: Studies published in English, Spanish and Portuguese; (VI) access to the full text in open access scientific journals. Exclusion criteria: (I) conference summaries, dissertations and unpublished

theses; (II) ineligible population: women in other stages of life than the puerperium; (III) interventions not relevant: articles that do not have as main objective the improvement of the quality of the assistance in the puerperium; (IV) period of Publication: Studies published before 2019; (V) language: studies published in languages other than English, Spanish and Portuguese; (VI) limited access: studies for which full text is not available.

Regarding the process of categorization and evaluation of the selected studies, the first step was to conduct a comprehensive research in the literature in relation to the theme proposed in the scientific database. After the research phase the studies are chosen based on the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. After obtaining the studies with interest for the theme, they were classified by their characteristics as the methodological type, intervention, population and main results, each study being evaluated for its methodological quality. After the evaluation, it was passed to the phase of the synthesis, being constructed a summary table with results obtained. At a final stage, the results of the review are interpreted according to the objective presented in response to the research question. Subsequently, the main conclusions on the evaluation of the results and the limitations of the study were elaborated.

During this integrative literature review, the methodological guide PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was followed.

Methodological Procedures

According to the methodological procedures, several steps were used for the construction of this integrative review of the literature such as the definition of the research question, definition of the exclusion and inclusion criteria, introduction of descriptors in the databases, recognition of the studies in the databases, selection of articles after reading the title and abstract, careful evaluation of the articles selected for this review and finally, the analysis of the data obtained.

According to the enumerated objective that served as the guiding basis for the Integrative Literature Review, a research question was performed using the mnemonic PICO, being (P) the target population, (I) the type of intervention, (C) the comparisons, (O) the result - Outcomes. Based on this structure, the following question was elaborated: How does teleconsultation (Intervention) influence the quality of nursing care (Results) of postpartum women (Population)? With the PICO question prepared, a collection of data on the subject under study was followed.

The research of scientific articles was carried out through the platform in the health database: EBSCOhost. Scientific articles published between 2019 and 2024 were searched using the following keywords: Care; Nursing; Information and Communication Technologies.

After applying the exclusion and inclusion criteria, 30 articles were obtained, after removal of the duplicates were 20 articles for analysis. After reading the title and abstract, the full text of the article was read, resulting in 7 articles, as presented in the PRISMA flow-chart, in Figure 1⁷. The articles that contained the best approach of the chosen theme were selected in order to achieve the objective of this research where the practical relevance of the results of the studies was considered so that they could be applied in the context of clinical practice and that they would contribute in an increase the existing knowledge containing quality criteria. The selected articles focused on studies on nursing care through telephone contact with users.

For the quality evaluation process of the selected articles, criteria were established, and the relevance of the study for the research question, the study design, the methodological rigor, the validity of the results and the clarity of the data exposure were determined. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) was used as assessment tools for qualitative studies.

RESULTS

The results of the literature review were analyzed in order to compare and synthesize the results of the included studies, based on thematic analysis of the content. After analyzing the seven articles, Chart 1⁷ presents the results in order to improve reading and interpretation.

DISCUSSION

After the analysis of the articles and the synthesis of their results, it is possible to show that the construction of nursing care involves a complex process. This process covers actions and behaviors of a technical and scientific nature, as well as personal, cultural, political and social attitudes, with the aim of establishing actions to promote, recover and preserve health. This approach demonstrates the inherent complexity of caring⁽⁴⁾.

The main mission of nursing is to take care in the whole process of life of the person, which is only possible through a continuous evaluation and centered on the needs and life options of the user. Thus, nurses are considered protagonists in the provision of care⁽¹⁾. The nursing process is organized in five stages: data collection, nursing diagnosis, nursing planning, implementation of actions and nursing evaluation⁽¹⁾. Based on these assumptions, the classic nursing consultation is an indispensable tool for health care and should be formally recorded, including the data obtained, nursing diagnoses, planned actions and results achieved⁽²⁾.

As time progressed, technological developments contributed significantly to qualified assistance through the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The ease of use and the development of the internet and other technologies allow a social rapprochement between users. Studies show that tools such as teleconsultations and remote monitoring platforms improve the accessibility and quality of health care⁽³⁾.

More recently, and largely due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the need arose to reorganize the health system to provide assistance remotely, thus avoiding physical contact^(4,5). Telecalls are an excellent strategy, especially in remote regions where access to face-to-face assistance is difficult. Nursing stands out as one of the professional areas most benefited by the use of ICTs. It is well established that health prevention and promotion practices are based on health education interventions and on the relationship with the patient, who is the protagonist of their health/disease process. The nurse acts as a great ally in this practice⁽³⁾.

Teleconsultation can be considered a recent technological innovation that contributes to changes in the work process. Although it does not replace the traditional way of providing care, teleconsultation adds new actions, promoting a more dynamic, effective and innovative training process. This method of work consists of a face-to-face consultation that facilitates interactions between a health professional and the patient, with the purpose of advising, performing nursing diagnoses and applying knowledge in practice by digital means⁽²⁾.

The concept of teleconsultation is under development in several countries, with objectives such as ease of follow-up, reduction of health care costs, and overcoming epidemiological factors and geophysical barriers. The phone, being a widely used device, increases access to health care. According to the Classification of Nursing Interventions (Nursing Interventions Classification – NIC), telephone follow-up is an intervention based on patient evaluation and the identification of potential problems resulting from previous treatments, examinations or tests⁽¹⁾. Dealing with this type of consultation is a new challenge for both health professionals and users⁽⁶⁾.

Telephone assistance, compared to face-to-face consultations, has demonstrated clinical and economic effectiveness. Studies indicate that nurses consider teleconsultation a useful resource in the process of improving the quality of care⁽⁸⁾.

Telehealth has become an important instrument in professional nursing practice. It has increased the channels of communication, clarification of doubts and support to users continuously, avoiding a large flow of people in the same space⁽⁶⁾. Overcoming geographical barriers with the use of these technologies in health is essential for the expansion of professional practice, improving access to health care and the quality of service provided. In order to meet current health needs, nursing integrates several ICTs in its professional practice, providing access to health through telephone calls or videoconferences⁽³⁾.

Telephone contact in health has several advantages, such as: increasing accessibility (working hours, caregivers of dependent people, distance from the health center, etc.); avoiding travel and reducing the risk of contagion, providing greater peace of mind to users; being within reach of virtually all people (does not require technology or digital skills); allowing to assess whether the patient will need a face-to-face visit later, allowing the professional to decide when and how much time to dedicate to the consultation; and the professional does not need to be physically present, being able to call from anywhere, as long as he has access to the patient's clinical history. Studies show that when there is a quality video call, communication improves significantly and the consultation can be as effective as a face-to-face, allowing analyzing vital signs, posture, skin color and general appearance, representing a breakthrough in quality^(6,8). The nurse is essential in this process, being responsible for preventive monitoring or monitoring during treatments, home admissions, postoperative or hospital discharge. This contact is made possible by this assistance technology, allowing the development of health education actions, with a view to empowering users to deal with adversities in the home environment⁽³⁾.

The appropriate use of ICTs can become a phenomenon promoting care, based on a posture of rationality, subjectivity and empathy, qualifying nursing care. The technologies used in health care are integrated in the work process, based on the relationships between professionals and users. This provides the creation of links facilitates access to health outside consultations and favors nursing care, increasing the quality of care⁽⁴⁾.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this work involve the samples of articles used. Only online and free articles were included, which may have led to the exclusion of important studies that require paid access. This limitation may have affected the diversity and representativeness of the studies analyzed, potentially restricting the generalization of the results. Another limita-

tion was language-based research, since only articles in Portuguese, Spanish and English were selected. This choice may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant studies published in other languages, limiting the scope of the data analyzed.

Contributions to Nursing

This Integrative Literature Review provides a reflection on the importance of telephone monitoring by nurses in the postpartum period. It reinforces the fundamental role of this monitoring in the early phase of family life, highlighting the sharing of information and significant contributions to the quality of care. The evidence presented highlights the importance of supporting families by promoting practical benefits such as reducing travel costs and time, and improving accessibility to health care. It is essential that nurses understand the impact of good follow-up and adjust their interventions to maximize health gains, focusing on prevention and health promotion. Continuous training in ICTs is essential to enable nurses to use these tools effectively, thus ensuring continuous improvement of care. Examples of successful training programs can serve as a model for implementation in different health contexts.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In an era marked by technology, challenged by social demands and the incessant search for quality, it is essential that the nursing profession adapt its skills and abilities to this new paradigm. This study showed that technology in health, especially teleconsultation, is a reality increasingly valued for its ease of access. Technology acts as a mediator between the rationality of procedures and the subjectivity of building the bond between the nurse and the patient, strengthening this relationship and providing quality care.

Teleconsultation has proven beneficial by amplifying access to health care, promoting personalized, efficient and quality care. This modality facilitated users' access to health services, improved communication and streamlined care to the population.

The importance of care marked by the technological standard was confirmed as an innovation in health care, ensuring access to care even in situations of isolation and social distancing, and promoting the quality of care provided. However, it is important to recognize the identified limitations, such as possible connection failures, communication difficulties between the professional and the user, lack of material resources, lack of ability to use technologies and mistrust of users in relation to the service performed.

This study contributes to the nursing area by highlighting the need for continuous training in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), enabling nurses to use these tools effectively. For future investigations, it is recommended to explore strategies to overcome the identified limitations and investigate the impact of teleconsultation in different contexts and populations.

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AG: Study coordination, study design, data collection, storage, and analysis, review and discussion of results.

AF: Study design, data analysis, review, and discussion of results.

All authors have read and agreed with the published version of the manuscript.

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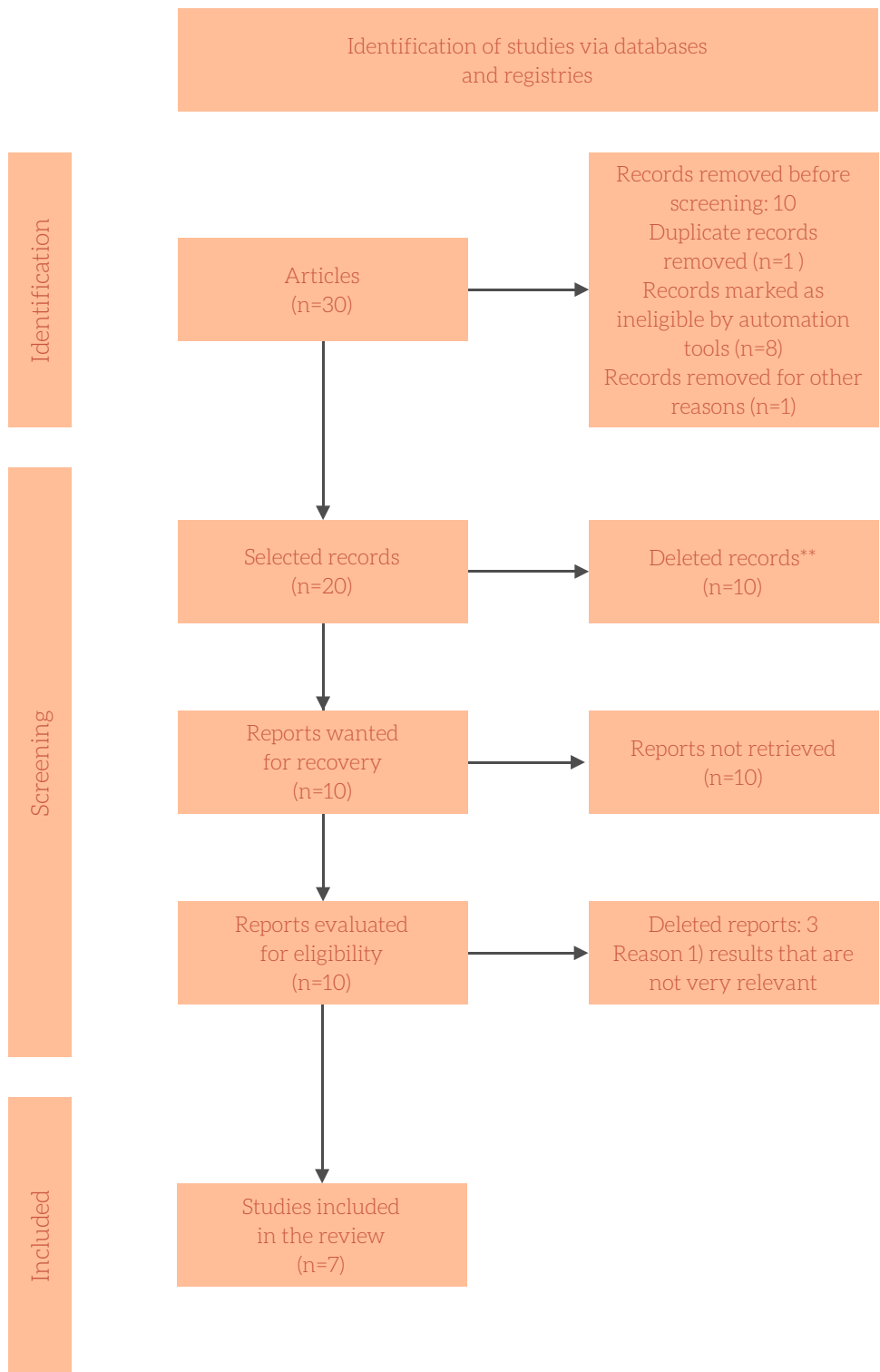


Figure 1 – Flowchart of the article selection process according to the PRISMA 2020 model.^κ

Chart 1 – Data extracted from the articles analyzed.↗↖

Authors (Year)	Participants (P), Type of Study or Level of Evidence	Intervention (I)/Objectives	Results/Conclusion
Coutinho, J; Domingos, C; Macedo, M; Paz, D; Souza, L; Souza, S, Toledo, D. Ano: 2022.	Type of study: integrative literature review.	Objective: To conduct a literature review on nursing care from remote consultation.	The method of nursing consultation by telephone is a recent practice that aims to help users in better management of their health through health education and to manage the adversities of pathology within the family.
Moretto, I; Contim, C; Santo, F. Year: 2019.	Type of study: Integrative literature review.	Objective: To know the scientific production on the monitoring of nurses by telephone.	The methods used to monitor users are feasible and effective, being commonly used in Asia and the United States. It is up to the nursing profession to identify user-centered methods according to their institutional situation.
Seco, E. Year: 2020.	Exploratory-descriptive study, with a qualitative approach.	Objective: To understand the steps of telephone consultation for quality approach.	The growing emergence of teleconsultations represents positive results for the multidisciplinary team. These professionals will need specific training for the consultation, and the telephone call should be extended to all professionals and the workload distributed. There should be awareness of the limitations of consultation and the most frequent errors. To obtain the best possible results, a well-structured approach is suggested in order to meet the objectives.
Amadigi, F; Castro, L; Costa, S; Lino, M; Machado, R; Pires, D; Zluhlán, L. Year: 2023.	Participants: Nurses and postpartum women. Exploratory-descriptive study, with a qualitative approach.	Objective: to analyze the perception of nurses on nursing teleconsultation in Primary Health Care through the characterization of workflows, potential, challenges and feasibility of teleconsultation in nursing.	Teleconsultation in the professional area of nurses is a technological innovation, presenting several challenges such as the difficulty of communication between the user and the nurse and also problems of connection with the internet; reduced capabilities for the use of new technologies, lack of privacy, background noise that can prevent good service and some mistrust on the part of users about this type of consultation. Through this telecare, there was an increase in accessibility to health services, and there is greater effectiveness in the teleconsultation held to mothers.

Chart 1 – Data extracted from the articles analyzed.↵↵

Authors (Year)	Participants (P), Type of Study or Level of Evidence	Intervention (I)/Objectives	Results/Conclusion
Alves, V; Barbosa, S; Ferreira, E; Muniz, T; Rodrigues, D; Vieira, B. Year: 2023.	Participants: Nurses and Puerperas. Type of Study: phenomenological study based on Max Scheler's Value Theory.	Objective: to unveil the valuative meanings of nurses in a human milk bank, on nursing teleconsultation.	The telephone consultation is marked by the values that expand and guarantee health care, improving accessibility to care of users, being very collaborative in the function of continuity of breastfeeding and breast milk donation.
Villanueva-Basilio, A. Year: 2020.	Participants: Postpartum women. Study Type: Quantitative, observational, analytical, cross-sectional study.	Objective: To determine the factors associated with the risk of postpartum depression in adult mothers assisted by teleconsultation at the National Perinatal Maternal Institute in 2020.	Depression and violence in the family are factors related to the risk of postpartum depression in adult women assisted through telephone consultation at the National Perinatal Maternal Institute.
Almeida, L; Carvalho, T; Carinhanha, J; Freire, R; Lopes, F; Medina, E; Mouta, R; Silva, S; Zveiter, M. Year: 2021.	Participants: Postpartum women. Type of study: experience report with the application of an intervention project based on the problem tree methodology.	Objective: To describe the experience of developing computerized and educational technologies in health in a family clinic located in the city of Rio de Janeiro, to improve the quality of care for puerperal women in the context of the pandemic.	Virtual technologies have been developed in the area of health to provide continuous assistance to postpartum women, application of online questionnaires and telephone consultation through video platforms. It is expected that the results of this research collaborate in the construction of a new care made possible (through new technologies) improvements in the care of women in the postpartum period.