

Community and public health nursing: looking to the future


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Abstract

Introduction

The times we live in are those of public health par excellence, as emphasized by the authors¹, when stating that in the post-pandemic, public health leadership will become the new normal.

But a recent United Nations report, on the Sustainable Development Goals 2020, about the third goal, ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages, highlights that the pandemic has jeopardized much of the progress made in public health, in reducing child mortality, vaccination, or treating chronic diseases.

Thus, and looking at public health through the prism of a sustainable future, it is argued that it will not be enough to improve what we already do, but to change the way of establishing priorities, ways of organizing societies, activities, population groups and reformulating behaviors².

As nurses are the largest group of health workers in Portugal, as in other contexts, as the World Health Organization report in 2018 highlighted, their contributions are important, and the paths to be followed by nursing, for the health promotion and disease prevention, as we will briefly present here.

Aims

To reflect future perspectives for community health and public health nursing, to contribute for better health.

Method

Critical-reflective narrative, based on published evidence and official texts.

Results and Discussion

Bearing in mind that, in Regulation nº 613/2022, the Order of Nurses defined that the act of the nurse includes nursing techniques and therapeutic measures, related to prevention, promotion, maintenance, rehabilitation, palliation and recovery of people, groups or communities, and that the new Statute of the National Health Service provides for the presence of community health and public health specialist nurses in the Public Health Units, we must conclude that their importance has been reinforced.

Currently, it is about developing skills to assess the health status of a community, training groups, coordinating health programs and epidemiological surveillance, as stated in the Regulation of the Order of Nurses, nº 428/2018.

It is important, however, to present, by way of example, other current and future perspectives for this nursing, whether in terms of practice or even research, which become challenges for it.

Thus, based on research at the genome level, it is identified that a third category of people's health risks has emerged, the genetic risk, which joins environmental and lifestyle risks. Therefore, authors argue that the relationship between public health and genomics is such that one cannot ignore its impact, and its technologies, for the benefit of the health of the population³.

Other studies warn that hesitation in vaccinating, postponing the vaccine, or refusing it,



puts herd immunity at risk. Thus, they propose community-based strategies to counteract this trend⁴.

In turn, Purdue University, in the United States, points out 10 important lines of research in nursing, for 2022, of which we highlight telehealth and technology in health care, the need for self-care in nursing, and increased specialization.

But it should be noted that, regarding the review and development of public health nursing competencies, it continues to be said that it is even more important to demonstrate how public health nursing improves the health of populations⁵.

Conclusions and Implications for Knowledge Development

Given the examples of ways to go, here presented, among other possibilities, and the norms that emphasize its relevance, community health and public health nursing should envision its future with a close eye on these challenges, for the discipline and for practice.

Keywords

Nursing; Community Health; Public Health; Pandemics; Sustainable Development Goals; Future.

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