



HEALTH PROMOTION WITH MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS

Promoção à saúde com trabalhadores de saúde mental

Promoción de la salud de trabajadores sanitarios

Patrícia Bitencourt Toscani Greco 

Integrated Regional University of Alto Uruguai and Missões (*Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões - URI*) - Santiago (RS) - Brazil

Alires Morozini Dias 

Integrated Regional University of Alto Uruguai and Missões (*Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões - URI*) - Santiago (RS) - Brazil

Camila Milene Soares Bernardi 

Integrated Regional University of Alto Uruguai and Missões (*Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões - URI*) - Santiago (RS) - Brazil

Danúbia Moraes Legramante 

Integrated Regional University of Alto Uruguai and Missões (*Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões - URI*) - Santiago (RS) - Brazil

Emanuelli Mancio Ferreira da Luz 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria - UFSM*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Marina Mazzuco de Souza 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria - UFSM*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

Juliana Dal Ongaro 

Federal University of Santa Maria (*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria - UFSM*) - Santa Maria (RS) - Brazil

ABSTRACT

Objective: To report the experience of undergraduate students in the development of health promotion actions with mental health workers. **Data Synthesis:** This experience report was developed by nursing students from a university in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, to address the development of health promotion actions with mental health workers. A total of eight meetings were held from 2015 to 2016 and the themes addressed were aimed at the reflection and discussion about the work process, professionals' quality of life, and performance of activities to promote occupational health using spaces for reflection and activities to promote health and prevent diseases. **Conclusion:** The activities held by undergraduate students with the population of mental health workers favored a differentiated look at the aspects that involve occupational health and allowed the development of interdisciplinary teamwork among undergraduate courses.

Descriptors: Nursing; Occupational Health; Health Promotion; Health Education; Mental Health.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Relatar a experiência de discentes de graduação no desenvolvimento de ações de promoção à saúde com trabalhadores de saúde mental. **Síntese dos dados:** Trata-se de um relato de experiência realizada por discentes de Enfermagem de uma universidade do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, de desenvolvimento de ações de promoção à saúde com trabalhadores de saúde mental. Foram realizados oito encontros, no período de 2015 a 2016, cujos temas destinaram-se à reflexão e discussão do processo de trabalho e qualidade de vida dos profissionais, bem como à realização de atividades para promoção da saúde ocupacional, a partir de espaços de reflexão e atividades de promoção da saúde e prevenção de agravos. **Conclusão:** As atividades realizadas pelos discentes de graduação junto à população de trabalhadores de saúde mental oportunizaram um olhar diferenciado sobre os aspectos que envolvem a saúde do trabalhador, bem como propiciaram o desenvolvimento de um trabalho em equipe e interdisciplinar entre os cursos de graduação.

Descritores: Enfermagem; Saúde do trabalhador; Promoção da Saúde; Educação em Saúde; Saúde Mental.



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RESUMEN

Objetivo: Relatar la experiencia de discentes de graduación para el desarrollo de acciones de promoción de la salud de trabajadores de salud mental. **Síntesis de los datos:** Se trata de un relato de experiencia realizada por discentes de Enfermería de una universidad de Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, sobre el desarrollo de acciones de promoción de la salud de trabajadores de salud mental. Se realizaron ocho encuentros en el periodo entre 2015 y 2016 cuyos temas se han destinado para la reflexión y discusión del proceso de trabajo y calidad de vida de los profesionales así como la realización de actividades para la promoción de la salud laboral a partir de espacios para reflexión y actividades de promoción de la salud y prevención de agravios. **Conclusión:** Las actividades realizadas por los discentes de graduación con la población de trabajadores de salud mental ofrecieron una mirada diferenciada de los aspectos que involucran la salud del trabajador así como ha promovido el desarrollo de un trabajo en equipo e interdisciplinar entre los cursos de grado.

Descriptor: Enfermería; Salud Laboral; Promoción de la Salud; Educación en Salud; Salud Mental.

INTRODUCTION

The National Mental Health Policy issued by the Ministry of Health (MoH) reaffirms the importance and the need to plan the care for people with specific needs related to mental health treatment and care⁽¹⁾. The policy seeks to promote social integration and strengthen the autonomy, protagonism and social participation of individuals with mental disorders.

The mental health field has undergone changes in its care model, such as the decentralization of hospitals and the foundation of Psychosocial Care Centers (*Centros de Atenção Psicossocial - CAPS*). Such changes have led to significant advances in the redefinition of health practices and have produced new concepts of the health-disease process⁽²⁾. In that regard, mental health workers are expected to change their work organization and process so as to adapt to the new model of mental health care, which includes bonding with users and families, active listening and other characteristics that expose these workers to occupational illness⁽³⁾.

Given that, the Ministry of Health issued the National Workers' Health Policy (*Política Nacional de Saúde do Trabalhador e da Trabalhadora - PNSTT*) in 2012, which allows to identify the activities carried out and map situations of health risks in order to assess workers' needs, demands and health problems. Furthermore, this policy aims to promote interventions in both work environments and processes and their surroundings to improve the quality of life of workers⁽⁴⁾.

It should be noted that the closeness of work-worker relationships has been the subject of studies in the health field. Work can cause pleasure, raise status, define personal identity, boost human growth and make life meaningful⁽⁵⁾. However, it is also known that the work environment is still permeated by factors that negatively affect workers' health and hence compromise their professional performance and their ability to carry out work activities⁽⁶⁾.

Thus, it is important to emphasize that mental health workers need strategies aimed at health promotion. Health promotion is defined as a strategy to improve the population's quality of life. In addition, it also aims to develop actions to face problems based on the identification of social determinants that interfere with the health of a population so as to promote satisfaction and well-being in the work environment⁽⁷⁾.

Health promotion is believed to prevent occupational diseases and it is considered fundamental in sustaining work capacity. Therefore, it contributes to the strengthening of favorable working conditions, well-being, capacity and quality of life in the work environment, thus favoring the reduction of absenteeism due to occupational diseases, disability (temporary or permanent), and early retirement⁽⁸⁾.

It is expected that interdisciplinary actions (health workers) to promote health with university students can establish a beneficial job for workers. Thus, collective actions enable the team to build strategies to face the demands and stressors inherent in the work process. Moreover, these actions allow visibility of the implications of their strategies in mental health in addition to exchanges of knowledge and partnerships that enhance the practices carried out in such space⁽⁹⁾.

The role of Nursing as an integral part of interdisciplinary work encompasses attributions directed to the development of technical, scientific and social training activities that are valuable. Such attributions are not only aimed at building technical capacity, but also at promoting reflection on the act of caring. Thus, the development of actions related to workers' health contributes to health promotion and to an improvement in quality of life at work⁽¹¹⁾.

In that regard, the National Health Promotion Policy (*Política Nacional de Promoção da Saúde - PNPS*) proposes changes to health care work with a view to promoting health and quality of life. It also considers that sectors and institutions are fundamental to produce health and care. Thus, it is necessary to consolidate practices aimed at individuals and collectivities through a multidisciplinary, integrated and networked practice that considers the health needs of the population in activities jointly developed by the various stakeholders in a given territory⁽¹¹⁾.

Health promotion can be understood as an innovative suggestion of health for the population as it allows reflection in the face of current difficulties in society and collaborates with the importance and enhancement of appropriate attitudes for quality of life⁽¹²⁾.

The rates of mental illness among mental health workers, as shown by a study of CAPS workers, have shown a medium level of stress⁽³⁾ and moderate to critical rates of professional exhaustion⁽⁵⁾. Furthermore, a study carried out in the south of the country found that 20.3% of public health workers have some type of common mental disorder and 11.6% have, at some point, had suicidal ideation⁽¹³⁾. In view of these results, there is a need to create opportunities to produce health and well-being in the work of mental health teams.

Thus, the justification for the present experience report is the idea that educational actions are effective tools to disseminate learning and autonomy to promote the health of mental health workers. Thus, such experience is relevant because it enables undergraduate students of a community university to reflect on and use education and health promotion actions to develop and/or expand the well-being and quality of life of mental health workers.

In view of what was outlined above, the present study aimed to report the experience of undergraduate students in the development of health promotion actions with mental health workers.

DATA SYNTHESIS

This is an experience report about health promotion actions with mental health workers developed by nursing students based on the extension project titled "Health promotion: an interdisciplinary space for workers in the Psychosocial Care Centers of the municipality of Santiago" of the undergraduate Nursing School of the Integrated Regional University of Alto Uruguai and Missões (*Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões - URI*), Santiago campus, Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Brazil⁽¹⁴⁾. The extension project is registered in the URI Project System (*Sistema de Projetos da URI - SPURI*) and in the Research and Extension Center (*Núcleo de Pesquisa e Extensão - NUPEX*) and was funded by two institutional notices: 04/2015 and 06/2016. The proposed actions were carried out from August 2015 to July 2016 at the CAPS of that city.

At CAPS, care is directed to assist individuals with mental disorders through clinical monitoring and social reintegration⁽¹⁾. The target audience of the activities consisted of a multidisciplinary team. Integration, bonding and empathic relationships were built between students and workers.

A total of eight meetings lasting approximately one hour each were held. The dissemination of the project among workers and the organization of the space for carrying out the activity were the responsibility of the students involved in the extension project.

Health promotion actions were planned jointly by teachers and students in view of the reality of the service and the suggestions listed by workers and in accordance with the PNPS⁽¹¹⁾. In addition, planning was based on suggestions for activities and the needs listed by workers.

The actions developed at the meetings provided a space for reflection and discussion on the work process, quality of life in the workplace, recognition, engagement and professional valorization. Activities to prevent physical injuries to workers' health were also addressed, such as: workplace gymnastics, functional circuit, slackline, massage techniques and physical and physiotherapy exercises.

The first meeting was aimed at raising awareness and presenting the extension project to workers. Afterwards, a group activity was carried out in which the workers demonstrated, through drawings and/or writing, their life history including facts internal and external to the work environment to reflect on the work process. Then, each participant presented their work to the group and it was later glued to a collective poster. This collective organization allowed to tell the history of all workers who worked in the facility and made it possible to realize how much work and personal life are intertwined. In that regard, workers discussed the need to unite and for mutual support in the workplace.

In the second moment, the activities focused on the prevention of physical health problems for workers. A space was provided to perform physical activity and move the body through workplace gymnastics and rhythmic dance with the help of a physical educator. These activities provided the team with interaction and synchrony and promoted

the relaxation and lightness of the environment. The practice of physical activity in the workplace helps to promote health and quality of life for workers. In addition, it allows to prevent diseases that repetitive and monotonous work can cause, thus increasing the worker's disposition and promoting greater integration in the workplace⁽¹⁵⁾.

The third activity was organized by the CAPS workers who invited a physician to give a speech about motivation and work-related quality of life. It should be noted that the themes contemplated the expectations of the participants, which allowed reflections on work performance. The participants were engaged and interested in the activity and satisfied with the actions developed. In that regard, personal and work satisfaction, as well as motivation, are linked to the quality of life at work, which provides an increase in productivity⁽¹⁶⁾.

In the fourth meeting, activities were performed using massage techniques with the aid of spiky balls, which workers slid over their body segments individually or in pairs in order to promote body relaxation. The workers were very excited and relaxed during the activity, which could be noted by the duration of the massages, which exceeded the 60 minutes of activity proposed by the project, thus corroborating a study in which massage in the workplace was an important preventive tool that helped decrease tension, fatigue, musculoskeletal pain and improve the mood of workers⁽¹⁷⁾.

In the fifth and last moment of the year 2015, another group activity was held with the intention of choosing a fictitious president for the CAPS of the municipality. A poll was carried out with the name of each worker with the purpose of having each participant place the virtues that the chosen colleague possessed and, thus, advertise him/her in the form of magazine clippings. After that, everyone agreed on which participant would best represent the position of president. Thus, this meeting enabled the valorization of workers and reflections on their contributions in the multidisciplinary dimension, since each worker sought to demonstrate the qualities and skills of their colleagues in the work environment.

The sixth meeting, held in 2016, consisted of a meeting of teachers, students and CAPS workers to summarize the actions proposed by the project. Physical Education students were invited to the meeting to propose physical activities through functional exercises with elastic bands of different intensities. The integration of students from both courses extended to the next meeting.

In the seventh meeting, the activity called slackline and a small functional circuit were developed. The circuit consisted of activities that included jumping rope, squatting, running and performing lateral jumps. The development of these activities was important in the work environment since it allowed the distraction and involvement of workers and students from both courses. It should be noted that activities like these contribute to the promotion of quality of life among mental health workers⁽¹⁵⁾.

In the eighth and last meeting, another group activity was conducted to address recognition, engagement and professional valorization. A decorated box was given to one of the participants who was then asked to hand it over successively to one person at a time according to the different adjectives that appeared so that it reached all the participants. Finally, the participants were asked to give the box to a generous person. The participant with such adjective who got the box opened the gift to share it with the others. This activity allowed workers to exchange compliments and qualities, which made them feel recognized and valued within the team.

The meetings allowed the discussion about valorization and recognition among peers, integration and teamwork, and provided the participants with moments of physical activity. They offered the workers a space for relaxation, movement and reflection on its benefits and the possibility of incorporating it into their daily lives. In this context, a study of mental health workers has suggested that improvement programs be offered to workers. In addition, spaces permeated by recognition, freedom and horizontality of relationships also stand out as a generator of pleasure at work⁽¹⁾.

The actions proposed by the present project strengthened the relationships between team members and favored the relationship between the faculty and the workers. In this perspective, the practice corroborates a study that highlighted some characteristics of quality of life at work, such as: favorable working conditions; harmonic environment; being valued and heard; being respected; job satisfaction; opportunities for development; recognition; good relationship with colleagues, among others⁽¹⁶⁾.

Furthermore, the importance of articulating educational institutions and health services should be highlighted as it fosters training based on the reality of the health system. In addition, it constitutes a partnership for the transformation of these services through health promotion and disease prevention actions⁽¹⁾.

The students' evaluation of the development of interdisciplinary health promotion actions was positive. There was integration between the students and the team, which allowed the students to experience much more than just the

actions conducted with CAPS workers. Thus, the experience gave students the opportunity to experience everyday situations in a mental health service and to observe the performance of health workers in health promotion activities.

The development of interdisciplinary actions to promote the health of mental health workers is justified by the high risk of physical and psychological illness to which workers are exposed^(3,5). Attention should be paid to these workers because in addition to the common occupational risks, such as noise, bacteria, inadequate body posture, stress, among other factors that health institutions cause, in the context of mental health the exposure is even greater since they are places permeated by emotional tension due to the situations experienced and the unpredictability of the assisted patients⁽¹⁸⁾.

Studies have shown high rates of mental disorders associated with psychological overload (23.7% and 20.3%)^(19,13) among health workers, which lead to restriction of work activities. Health workers with high psychological demands and low control of work demands have commonly been identified with common mental disorders^(13,20).

In that regard, the health risks to which mental health workers are exposed deserve the attention of researchers and public health managers, especially those responsible for making humanized services feasible⁽³⁾. Therefore, providing a space to give voice to workers may be a way of reflecting on the work process and carrying out activities aimed at preventing physical and psychological problems.

It is important to emphasize that discussion about the health of workers should start during undergraduate training in order to favor the training of professionals who reflect on their practice and its impact on their health. It is believed that the university's extramural activities, promoted through extension projects, strengthen the training of students as health professionals, foster health education actions and facilitate workers' access to information.

Given the above, health professionals need quality of life to promote adequate and quality health care. Workers may face several problems in their daily lives which compromise their daily functions and duties in the service, and which are sometimes able to affect their quality of life. The promotion of workers' health and well-being favors a more productive and less harmful work environment⁽²¹⁾.

The meetings planned by the students used different methodologies and group activities. These activities strengthened relationships at work and provided workers with moments of integration and well-being. For students, planning actions to promote the health of workers made it possible to reflect on team practice in health work. It should be noted that students need to carry out actions based on methodological proposals that allow their critical, reflective and intellectual growth so as to develop collective strategies⁽¹⁰⁾.

The university must be responsible and committed to providing this supporting space to enable discussion and construction of knowledge. Thus, extension can be the way in which the university disseminates its knowledge, thereby becoming an important means of integration between university and community⁽²²⁾. The university extension makes it possible to combine theory and practice in the quest to share knowledge and experience the work reality.

Health promotion actions can help workers develop self-care practices and face the demands and stressors inherent in the work process. For CAPS workers, providing opportunities for improvements in the quality of life at work can represent a reduction in the rate of absenteeism due to occupational diseases and better quality of life.

The physical activities promoted in the meetings that took place in the extension project favor the prevention of diseases that can be caused by repetitive and monotonous work. Health promotion through workplace gymnastics activities can positively influence the quality of life of workers⁽²³⁾.

Health workers exert physical and cognitive effort in their functions, which requires extreme attention, balance and care when performing them. In addition, they are inserted in an environment that features a high probability of triggering stress and, consequently, physical and psychological overload, which cause a decrease in self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. In view of these issues, motivation helps in the process of improving the quality of life at work. By providing a set of actions to workers in their work environment, satisfaction and harmony in their relationships in society are improved⁽²⁴⁾.

The quality of life at work is linked to human development, social and economic aspects, the individual's health status, job satisfaction and family relationships. As for the health of the worker, it is necessary to implement health promotion and protection interventions to reduce the risks present in the work environment. It is noted that providing workers with opportunities for new projects and continuing education programs minimizes the health-disease process and enable professional training and valorization⁽⁶⁾.

It is believed that the extension meetings constituted a strategy for the promotion of the health of the CAPS workers as they enabled support to improve their quality of life through physical, recreational, leisure and intervention activities. These types of health promotion actions provide an exchange of experiences and knowledge about the theme involved and foster the autonomy and critical thinking of those involved⁽²⁵⁾. The participants may be multipliers

among their peers in their jobs since coping strategies and other actions to promote occupational health can be learned and expanded.

In addition to contributing to the health and well-being of workers, the activities of the extension project enabled a lighter working environment and a space for integration, reflection, self-care and care among colleagues. Corroborating what has been described, a study found that health promotion actions provide better living and health conditions in services and in the worker's life. Additionally, they are an effective way of producing health in the workplace aimed at different audiences: multiprofessional health workers, education workers, company workers, among others⁽²⁶⁾.

It is believed that the activities developed in the extension project corroborate the objectives of the PNPS given that some of the actions developed are interconnected to it, such as: the development of spaces for social production and a healthy environment, which favors human development and well-being; the promotion of empowerment and the ability to make decisions autonomously in the work process; and also the promotion of educational actions aimed at promoting workers' health in accordance with the principles and values expressed in the PNPS⁽¹¹⁾.

This study had a positive impact since the extension project became a systematic program in the public services of the municipality after two years. This contributes significantly to PNPS as the actions developed were targeted at the individual and the community in a perspective of multidisciplinary and integrated work in order to consider the health needs of the population, with actions articulated between the different stakeholders. In addition, the actions included the PNPS guidelines, especially with regard to fostering the development of projects and research and the production and dissemination of knowledge and innovative strategies within the scope of health promotion actions⁽¹¹⁾.

Based on the reported experience, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the PNPS, it is possible to replicate these health promotion actions with workers from different health services aiming at the quality of life at work and the articulation between theory and practice on worker health by the students. Regarding training, it will enable future professionals who are more sensitive and prepared to reflect on organizational processes and the repercussions for workers and health care. As a limitation of this study, we highlight the difficulty adherence by professionals, maybe due to resistance in discussing the work organization.

Also, the need to use health promotion strategies with workers working in public health services should be highlighted, regardless of the complexity of the care involved. Thus, articulating the PNPS and the PNSTT may positively reflect on the broadening of the view of health workers regarding the production of health and well-being of users and families.

CONCLUSION

The participation of undergraduate nursing students in health promotion actions with the population of mental health workers provided a different perspective on the aspects that involve occupational health and the opportunity to develop teamwork activities and interdisciplinarity between undergraduate courses.

In that regard, educational actions enabled the exchange of knowledge between teachers, students and workers, thus promoting the construction and multiplication of knowledge about the topics addressed.

It is important to value actions that promote the health and well-being of workers so that they can feel recognized and engaged in mental health care and professional development. Interdisciplinarity promoted the strengthening of this study and of the actions developed since it allowed to broaden the view on workers' health.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, both in the execution of the actions of the extension program and in the description of this experience report.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Patrícia Bitencourt Toscani Greco and **Danúbia Moraes Legramante** contributed to the study conception and design; acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data; and manuscript writing and/or revision. **Aires Morozini Dias**,

Camila Milene Soares Bernardi, Emanuelli Mancio Ferreira da Luz, Marina Mazzuco de Souza and Juliana Dal Ongaro contributed to acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data and manuscript writing and/or revision.

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Mailing address:

Patrícia Bitencourt Toscani Greco
Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões - URI
Av. Batista Bonoto Sobrinho
Bairro: São Vicente
CEP: 97700-000 - Santiago - RS - Brasil
E-mail: pbtoscani@hotmail.com

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