



Prison Health and Nursing Interventions for Inmates Living with HIV/AIDS

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ARTICLE REVIEW

ABSTRACT

This study addresses nursing care for inmates living with HIV/AIDS within the prison system. This paper aims to identify nursing interventions that improve access to and the quality of healthcare for this population. Specifically, it aims to understand the challenges faced by nurses, analyze the effectiveness of public policies, and propose care strategies. This is a Literature Review with a qualitative approach, supported by narrative review methods, aiming at a critical analysis of scientific evidence. Theoretical Approach: The study is grounded in public health and nursing frameworks focused on equity and comprehensive care. The findings reveal that nursing professionals face multiple challenges in caring for inmates with HIV/AIDS, including resource shortages, institutional stigma, and limited access to continuous treatment. Existing public policies show significant progress, but their effectiveness remains hindered by structural and operational weaknesses within correctional facilities. The study highlights the need to strengthen nursing actions within the prison system through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, continuous health education, and stronger alignment with public policies.

Palavras-chave: Sexual Health. HIV. Prisons. Quality of Life. Health.

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INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a serious public health issue caused by infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and it remains one of the most severe sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (BUCHBINDER et al., 2020). A major threat to global public health, the HIV/AIDS pandemic disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, especially those who are incarcerated.

The justification for conducting this study lies in the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among incarcerated populations, which constitutes an emerging public health problem (CHIMOYI et al., 2021). It is inferred that nursing interventions, when grounded in specific public policies, can mitigate the impacts of HIV/AIDS by ensuring not only individual care for inmates but also contributing to overall public health. By understanding and proposing improvements in nursing practices, this study aims to help build a more humane and efficient prison system that respects inmates' health rights and enhances efforts to prevent the spread of the virus.

This research may contribute to the fields of nursing and public health by deepening the understanding of healthcare practices provided to inmates with HIV/AIDS in Brazil. By identifying the main challenges faced by nurses and analyzing the effectiveness of current public policies, the study proposes evidence-based interventions that can optimize care within the prison system. Furthermore, it reinforces the importance of prevention and health education strategies, aiding in the reduction of HIV transmission in prison environments. The study also highlights the need for structural and educational improvements in the prison healthcare system, advocating for a more humanized and effective approach.

It is known that the population deprived of liberty (PDL) is among the key populations considered vulnerable to HIV. This group notably includes gay men and men who have sex with men, sex workers, transgender individuals, people who use drugs, and the incarcerated (CHIMOYI et al., 2021; VALERA et al., 2022). The prison population deserves particular attention due to high-risk behaviors such as tattooing with improvised materials, sharing drug paraphernalia, and unprotected sexual activity, as well as poor confinement conditions and limited access to healthcare. These factors significantly increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in the prison setting (SOUSA et al., 2022).



The health conditions of inmates are worsened by these factors, creating an environment conducive to the spread of infectious diseases. Data from the Brazilian Ministry of Justice and Public Security indicate that the HIV infection rate among prisoners is significantly higher than in the general population, underscoring the urgent need for targeted public health interventions (BRAZ DE OLIVEIRA et al., 2020).

The prison environment has unique characteristics that increase the likelihood of disease transmission and hinder access to healthcare. As a result, nurses play a critical role in promoting well-being, preventing new infections, and monitoring treatment. In addition to the social, cultural, and structural challenges faced by the prison system, the lack of access to preventive treatments and misinformation about HIV/AIDS leads many inmates to enter the system with pre-existing health problems. However, everyday life in prisons often stands in contrast to the rights guaranteed by law.

To ensure that prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, and harm reduction measures are effective, public health policies aimed at this population must be reinforced and re-evaluated. A careful and targeted approach is necessary to address the effects of HIV on the health of incarcerated individuals. The routine implementation of screening programs to detect HIV/AIDS among new inmates facilitates early identification and timely treatment initiation (PIOVESAN et al., 2017).

The promotion of educational programs within prisons is essential to increase awareness about HIV, how to prevent its spread, and how inmates can adhere to treatment. Moreover, it is crucial to ensure that individuals living with the virus have continuous access to antiretroviral therapy and regular medical care (MACHADO et al., 2021).

Nurses working in prison systems face numerous challenges, including shortages of supplies, human resources, infrastructure, and interference from correctional officers (MELO et al., 2023). Regarding HIV/AIDS, additional challenges in the prison context include late diagnosis, stigma, and difficulties in accessing appropriate care. The quality and availability of health services in prisons vary widely across countries and institutions. Ideally, healthcare for detainees should follow ethical and professional standards, ensuring access to high-quality care without discrimination based on inmate status.

In the context of HIV/AIDS, prison health systems must guarantee early



diagnosis, appropriate antiretroviral therapy in line with current medical guidelines, regular viral load monitoring, and psychosocial support to address the complexities of the disease. Caring for people infected with this virus requires the promotion of public health, the prevention of new infections, and the maintenance of continuous treatment (LEITE et al., 2022). Furthermore, public policies should focus on improving prison health conditions to uphold inmates' right to health. Nursing plays a vital role in improving inmates' quality of life and in containing the spread of HIV/AIDS within prisons, contributing to the development of a more humane and appropriate correctional system.

Healthcare professionals must stay aligned with the latest guidelines from the Ministry of Health or local health authorities to ensure the proper management of HIV/AIDS in accordance with established care standards. From this, a guiding question emerges: what are the main challenges faced by nurses in caring for inmates living with HIV/AIDS, and how can nursing interventions improve access to and quality of healthcare for these individuals?

Given this context, the general objective of this study is to identify nursing interventions in the care of inmates living with HIV/AIDS, with the aim of optimizing access to and the quality of health services provided in the prison system. The specific objectives are: (i) to assess the main challenges faced by nursing professionals in caring for inmates with HIV/AIDS; (ii) to discuss existing public policies regarding inmate health in the context of HIV/AIDS and their effectiveness; and (iii) to propose nursing intervention strategies to improve quality of life and disease control among inmates.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a Literature Review (LR), considering that this methodology adopts approaches that help minimize bias in order to produce reliable results that can inform decision-making. The study follows a qualitative approach through a Narrative Literature Review focused on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the health of incarcerated individuals in prison settings.

The LR is grounded in recent peer-reviewed scientific articles, excluding grey literature and unreliable sources. According to GARCIA (2014), a literature review is



developed from a clearly defined research question with the aim of identifying, evaluating, selecting, and synthesizing evidence from empirical studies that meet pre-established eligibility criteria.

As stated by GALVÃO and RICARTE (2019), literature reviews may sometimes be updated rather than completely rewritten. However, the present review does not represent an update, as it was structured from the specific research problem outlined in this study. This process ensures that the included studies address the guiding research question and comply with the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined for this research. At this stage, the focus is to present the studies in a categorized manner to facilitate interpretation of the findings. This framework is intended for organizing and tabulating the data and includes information such as title, year of publication, authors, and the journal in which the article appeared.

The databases used for the active search of articles were MEDLINE, the Virtual Health Library (BVS), SciELO, among others. These databases were selected due to their ease of access and the wide circulation of health-related journals aligned with the research topic. From there, specific search strategies were applied according to the parameters of each database.

Subsequently, an initial review of selected abstracts was conducted. Articles were excluded based on their titles, and then the remaining abstracts were read. From this screening, 57 studies were selected for deeper analysis. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were then rigorously applied during the full-text review. After this process, a total of 37 articles were included for detailed examination.

This phase began in July 2024, focusing on the collection of data exported from the selected databases. During this stage, inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study were defined. The inclusion criteria were: (i) publications related to the health of inmates in penitentiary institutions, (ii) publications in English and Portuguese, and (iii) articles published over a ten-year period, from 2014 to 2024. The exclusion criteria were: (i) grey literature, (ii) publications with ambiguous results, and (iii) studies outside the field of health.

Following this, the data were analyzed and synthesized by examining titles and abstracts to ensure their relevance and alignment with the established criteria. The

results were then interpreted and organized into categories to facilitate analysis. For the purpose of structuring and tabulating the data, a table will be used containing information such as the article title, authors, year, and journal.

Relevant search terms were selected in advance to identify appropriate studies for the literature review. These terms were chosen based on the structured vocabulary known as Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS), which is used to index journal articles, books, conference proceedings, technical reports, and other types of materials. DeCS is a tool that allows navigation across records and information sources through controlled and organized concepts in Portuguese and Spanish, facilitating the retrieval of scientific literature on topics such as those used in this study: Sexual Health; Nursing; HIV; Prisons; Diagnosis; Infections; Quality of Life; Health.

Next, a quality assessment of the articles was conducted. For this purpose, a flowchart was established based on the model proposed by PAGE et al. (2021). This flowchart captures the results of the article selection process and will be used to summarize and organize the data from the literature review in a more structured manner (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Flowchart based on Page (2020)



Source: Developed by the authors (2024).

Finally, the presentation of the results will be carried out. The essence of the findings from this study will be communicated clearly and concisely, aiming to ensure a comprehensive understanding of what was discovered. The definitions, guidelines, and authenticity of the authors have been duly acknowledged, and citations and references were prepared in accordance with the standards of the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (ABNT).

This was done in compliance with Law No. 9.610 of 1998, which “amends, updates, and consolidates the legislation on copyright and provides other measures” (BRASIL, 1998). Furthermore, all methodological processes scientifically established for the Narrative Literature Review will be rigorously followed, ensuring the scientific integrity and accuracy of this work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to address the guiding question of this study, the articles presented in Table 1 describe the nursing interventions that should be adopted in the development of more effective health policies and practices within the prison system. These articles highlight the importance of the nurse's leadership role in promoting equity and addressing the vulnerabilities faced by this population.

Table 1: Articles included in the review

Title	Authors	Years	Source
Pesquisasocial:teoria, método e criatividade.	Minayo <i>et al.</i>	2010	Editora Vozes
Fatores associados à desnutrição em pessoas com 20 anos e mais, com HIV/AIDS, em serviços públicos de saúde no Município de São Paulo, Brasil.	Bassichetto <i>et al.</i>	2014	Cadernos de Saúde Pública, v. 30, p. 2578-2586
Revisão sistemática da literatura e integridade na pesquisa.	Garcia.	2014	Epidemiologia e Serviços de Saúde, v. 23, p. 7–8
Saúde enquanto direito dos apenados e o sistema prisional Sub Judice.	Arruda <i>et al.</i>	2015	J Nurs UFPE online
HIV na População Privada de Liberdade em Mato Grosso do Sul.	Sgarbi	2015	periodicos.ufgd.br
Percepções da qualidade de vida de pessoas com HIV/Aids.	Meirelles <i>et al.</i>	2016	Northeast Network Nursing Journal
Point-of-care HIV tests done by peers, Brazil.	Pascom <i>et al.</i>	2016	Bulletin of the World Health Organization, v.



			94, n. 8, p. 626
Qualidade da atenção primária na perspectiva de Profissionais: saúde de crianças e adolescentes com HIV.	Piovesan <i>et al.</i>	2017	Texto & Contexto– Enfermagem, v. 26
HIV/AIDS no cárcere: Desafios relacionados à regularidade no uso da terapia antirretroviral.	Ravanholi	2017	Dissertação (Mestrado) - Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto/USP
Assistência à saúde no sistema penitenciário em indivíduos portadores de HIV.	Lima, Freitas e Santos	2017	Cad Grad Ciênc Biol Saúde
Privacidade e confidencialidade no contexto mundial de saúde: uma revisão integrativa.	Nascimento, Lima e Gurgel	2017	Rev. Bioética y Derecho
HIV prevalence and sexual behavior among young male conscripts in the Brazilian army, 2016.	Sperhacke <i>et al.</i>	2018	Medicine, v. 97, n. 1S, p. S25–S31
Coordenação do cuidado durante a assistência prestada às pessoas privadas de liberdade que vivem com HIV.	Andrade	2019	Tese de Doutorado, Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto/USP
Revisão sistemática da literatura: conceituação, produção e publicação.	Galvão	2019	Logeion: Filosofia da informação, v. 6, n. 1, p. 57–73
The care provided to the sexual partners of people living with the human immunodeficiency virus.	Braz <i>et al.</i>	2020	Rev Rene, v. 21, n. 1
Prevalência de HIV/AIDS no sistema prisional brasileiro: uma revisão crítica.	Marques <i>et al.</i>	2020	Revista Brasileira de Epidemiologia
Assistência às pessoas com HIV/AIDS no cárcere: Revisão da literatura.	Bossonario <i>et al.</i>	2020	SciELO - Scientific Electronic Library Online
Política Nacional de Atenção Integral à Saúde das Pessoas Privadas de Liberdade (PNAISP): Uma Análise do seu Processo de Implementação no Contexto Atual do Sistema Prisional Paranaense.	Torres	2020	Revista do Legislativo Paranaense
The epidemiological impact of STIs among general and vulnerable populations of the Amazon region of Brazil: 30 years of surveillance.	Machado <i>et al.</i>	2021	Viruses, v. 13, n. 5, p. 855
Programas de saúde e prevenção do HIV em unidades prisionais: uma análise das práticas e desafios.	Lima <i>et al.</i>	2021	Revista Brasileira de Saúde Pública
The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews.	Page <i>et al.</i>	2021	International Journal of Surgery, v. 88, p. 105906
Atuação do enfermeiro na assistência à saúde no sistema prisional.	Machado	2021	Global Academic Nursing
Prevalência de doenças crônicas não transmissíveis no sistema prisional: um desafio para a saúde pública.	Serra <i>et al.</i>	2022	SciELO - Scientific Electronic Library Online
Estado, políticas públicas e saúde no sistema penitenciário.	Guerrero <i>et al.</i>	2022	Ciência & Saúde Coletiva [online]



Deisiane <i>et al.</i> Agravos e assistência à saúde em um sistema prisional	Da Silva Mesquita	2019	Revista Eletrônica Acervo Saúde
Cuidando de Pessoas Vivendo com HIV/Aids na Atenção Primária à Saúde: nova agenda de enfrentamento de vulnerabilidades?	Damião <i>et al.</i>	2022	Saúde em Debate [online]
Agente penitenciário na assistência em HIV/Aids no sistema prisional: revisão de literatura.	Sousa <i>et al.</i>	2022	Acta Paulista de Enfermagem [online]
O que representa o diagnóstico de HIV/Aids após quatro décadas de epidemia?	Muniz	2022	Saúde em Debate [online]
Atenção à saúde no sistema carcerário no contexto brasileiro – uma revisão de literatura sobre dificuldades encontradas pelo enfermeiro.	Maciel	2022	Rev. Puc – Goiás
Infecções Sexualmente Transmissíveis em homens no sistema prisional: Revisão Integrativa.	Oliveira	2022	Rev. Baiana Enferm.
Beyond access to medication: the role of SUS and the characteristics of HIV care in Brazil.	Alves <i>et al.</i>	2023	SciELO - Scientific Electronic Library Online
Desafios no tratamento do HIV/AIDS no sistema prisional: uma análise das condições de saúde e infraestrutura.	Silva	2023	Revista de Saúde Coletiva
Desafios enfrentados pelos enfermeiros para promoção da assistência à saúde efetiva no sistema carcerário brasileiro.	Melo <i>et al</i>	2023	Revista Multidisciplinar do Nordeste Mineiro
Direito do penitenciário soropositivo ao acesso a tratamento no sistema prisional brasileiro sob a luz do direito fundamental de acesso à saúde previsto na CF/88.	Teixeira	2023	periodicos.ufop.br
Políticas públicas e saúde no sistema prisional: avanços e perspectivas.	Santos	2024	Revista Brasileira de Administração

Source: Developed by the authors (2024).

Regarding the trajectory of HIV/AIDS in Brazil up to its current profile, there has been evident and severe neglect toward social segments that have historically been the primary victims of structural inequality—often serving as the "end point" of various past and present epidemics. Recognizing that an HIV/AIDS diagnosis is not merely a physiological matter but is also burdened by misinformation, prejudice, and social exclusion, the normalization of HIV as a chronic condition—due to reduced mortality and pressures from public sectors, healthcare professionals, and activists—may yield unintended consequences. Rather than eliminating stigma, it may hinder the sharing of



fears and concerns in patient–provider interactions, inadvertently reinforcing the very issues it aims to overcome, despite the hard-won lessons gained through the fight against AIDS (MUNIZ; BRITO, 2022).

Preliminary findings suggest that nursing practices, when solidly grounded in the Ministry of Health’s protocols and local guidelines, play a key role in improving the quality of life of incarcerated individuals and helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in prison settings. This strategy can also assist health organizations in prioritizing equity and inclusion in future intervention responses.

Furthermore, the barriers encountered by nursing professionals in implementing effective health promotion interventions for inmates are directly related to the enforcement of current legal frameworks. These challenges stem from the lack of coordination between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches and the deficit in public policy implementation that would ensure the fulfillment of basic human rights for the incarcerated (PEREIRA, 2022).

Among the main benefits of this strategy so far, the following stand out: assessing the primary challenges faced by nursing professionals in caring for inmates with HIV/AIDS; discussing existing public policies aimed at inmate health in the context of HIV/AIDS and evaluating their effectiveness; and proposing nursing intervention strategies to improve quality of life and disease control among incarcerated individuals.

It is expected that the results obtained through this research will contribute to the development of further studies related to more effective public policy strategies.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study highlighted the significance of nursing actions in the management and care of inmates living with HIV/AIDS within the prison system. Based on the narrative literature review, it became evident that nursing practices, when firmly grounded in the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and local protocols, play a fundamental role in improving the quality of life of incarcerated individuals and in helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in correctional settings.

Given the inadequate conditions present in the prison environment, it is essential that nurses adopt a welcoming and efficient approach to identify and address



underlying causes, in accordance with their professional responsibilities. Guided interventions—ranging from promoting access to healthcare to the implementation of control and prevention policies—are indispensable to address the complex health challenges faced by the prison population. Additionally, the demand for a more humane and appropriate prison system that considers the specific needs of inmates living with HIV/AIDS was actively affirmed in this work.

To achieve positive and satisfactory outcomes, it is crucial not only to ensure effective management and the implementation of appropriate interventions in this context, but also to emphasize the importance of the National Policy for Comprehensive Health Care for People Deprived of Liberty (PNAISP). This policy guarantees that inmates receive continuous and comprehensive care within the Unified Health System (SUS), thereby providing the necessary healthcare while preserving the integrity of incarcerated individuals.

Therefore, it is concluded that the enhancement of nursing interventions and the advancement of more effective public policies within the prison environment are essential methods for addressing this critical public health issue, demanding ongoing efforts from both nursing professionals and society at large.

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