

Nursing and Health Care Beyond the Technique

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The act of caring is widely represented in human history, as well as the warnings of the good and bad consequences of the actions of care and (neglecting) of this act. From the myth of Asclepius, Greek demigod whose talents for healing have threatened the order of the world [1] to the incredible medical discoveries in World War II at the expense of tortured human guinea pigs [2] warn of the dangers of the misstep between biological and philosophical. The action without reflection can compromise goals set in favor of beneficence, falling into the obscurantism of maleficence. Caring is an act that requires scientific, technical, biological and microbiological knowledge and skills, but also philosophical.

Nursing plays care as the essence of its doing in the different spaces of professional practice. Barbara Carper, with the publication of the Fundamental Nursing Knowledge Standards in the late 1970s and early 1980s, already considered this issue highlighting not only empirical knowledge (nursing science), but also ethics, aesthetics (art) and staff (moral) [3].

Despite these findings, the emphasis on technology to the detriment of ethical-moral reflections seems to permeate health care, especially in the current context of a pandemic, in which the situations experienced by Brazilian nursing call for ethical actions, in view of care and respect for life. However, given the need for urgent answers, it is argued that it is not convenient to “waste” the little time available with ethical, moral and bioethical considerations.

Ironically, it is in scenarios like this that ethical reflections need to be present in health care, especially in nursing care that is so close to individuals and their individualities. After all, how to provide quality care without pondering what would be the best care? And how to ponder what is the best care without considering the particularities of each case, ignoring ethical and moral values?

Such questions gain greater importance in scenarios of uncertainty, such as pandemics, in which the ethical implications arising from care actions can occur in favor of beneficence or fall into the trap of maleficence, both for professionals and for patients, as warned by the Greek myth of Esculápio and the tragic experiences experienced in World War II.

When the ethical-moral reflection of care is ignored, one assumes the high risk of attacking human rights, the professional and moral ethical values of society. Therefore, it is concluded that, regardless of the troubled scenario caused by the pandemic, ethical-moral considerations related to health care are essential and cannot be disregarded as conducts of a lower order than technological actions. Nurses have fundamental attributions in this context, due to the interrelation characteristics of their profession, after all, as Barbara Carper proves, ethical knowledge is one of the fundamental knowledge of nursing.

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