Knowledge and perspectives about medicinal cannabis in nurses and nursing students in Portugal

Aliete Cunha-Oliveira

A Cunha-Oliveira[1,2], C Paiva[2,3], T Santos[4], I Rosendo[5], J Rui Pita[2,3]
[1]Health Sciences Research Unit: Nursing, Nursing School of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal
[2]Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal
[3]Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal
[4]Primary Health Care, ULS de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Porto, Portugal
[5]Faculty of Medicine, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal
Contact: alietecunha@esenfc.pt

Background: The opening up of legislation on medicinal cannabis in recent years has been a determining factor in the growth of this therapy. In Europe, regulation of medicinal use is a reality in several countries. Nurses can play a leading role in its administration, helping to ensure that it is carried out more effectively and assuming a

fundamental role in the success of the therapy. It is therefore pertinent to analyze the knowledge of nurses and nursing students in Portugal about medicinal cannabis.

Methods: Quantitative descriptive study. A self-completion questionnaire was drawn up and made available on the google forms platform. It was face-validated, content-validated and approved by the Ethics Committee. The instrument included sociodemographic data, questions about cannabis knowledge and perspectives. Descriptive statistics were analyzed.

Results: Out of a total of 610 responses, 318 were nurses and 292 nursing students. Medical cannabis is considered legitimate by 79.6% of nurses and 84.3% of students. When asked about the functions of the endocannabinoid system, 71.7% of nurses and 79.5% of students said they had no knowledge. 88.7% of nurses and 79.5% of students disagreed that they had sufficient knowledge to advise users on the use of medicinal cannabis. Also, 38.4% believe that their patients use cannabis illegally to manage the symptoms of illnesses.

Conclusions: There is a need for continuing training for nurses and for the undergraduate and postgraduate nursing curricula to include this emerging area.

Key messages:

- The results show that this issue is a public health problem. It reinforces the need to formulate public policies in this area and to implement training for nurses and nursing students.
- These measures will be fundamental in preventing the use of illegal cannabis and promoting the safe use of medicinal cannabis.