

USE OF THE OPERATIVE GROUP IN HEALTH CARE: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to identify how the Operative Group has been used in the area of health, and what the evidence is for its use in the scientific literature. An integrative review was undertaken, in the following databases: Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Science Information (LILACS), Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System On-Line (MEDLINE) and National Library of Medicine in the PUBMED database. Articles published between 2002 and July 2014, which addressed the Operative Group, as proposed by Pichon-Rivière, were selected. A total of 23 articles was found, discussed in the following categories: the Operative Group in Peoples' Health Care; the Operative Group in the Professional's Teaching-Learning Process; the Use of the Operative Group in the Management of Health Services; and, the Operative Group in Health Research. The Operative Group has been adopted in health care for chronic illnesses, research, management, and training of health workers. It is concluded that this tool is relevant for the care and that studies with other methodological designs are necessary.

DESCRIPTORS: Group processes; Health; Review literature as a topic : Healthcare

USO DO GRUPO OPERATIVO NA ATENÇÃO EM SAÚDE: REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA

RESUMO: O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar como o Grupo Operativo tem sido utilizado na área de saúde e quais as evidências de seu uso na literatura científica. Foi realizada revisão integrativa, nas bases : Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (LILACS), *Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System On-Line* (MEDLINE) e *National Library of Medicine* na base PUBMED. Selecionaram-se artigos publicados de 2002 a julho de 2014 que abordassem o Grupo Operativo proposto por Pichon-Rivière. Foram encontrados 23 artigos discutidos nas categorias : Grupo Operativo na Atenção à Saúde das Pessoas; Grupo Operativo no Processo Ensino-Aprendizagem do Profissional; Uso do Grupo Operativo na Gestão de Serviços em Saúde; Grupo Operativo na Pesquisa em Saúde. O Grupo Operativo é adotado na atenção à saúde em doenças crônicas, pesquisa, gestão e formação de trabalhadores de saúde. Conclui-se que essa ferramenta é relevante para o cuidado e que são necessárias pesquisas com outros delineamentos metodológicos.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Processos grupais; Saúde; Literatura de revisão como assunto; Assistência à saúde.

USO DEL GRUPO OPERATIVO EN LA ATENCIÓN EN SALUD: REVISIÓN INTEGRATIVA

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este estudio fue identificar cómo el Grupo Operativo viene siendo utilizado en el área de salud y cuales las evidencias de su uso en la literatura científica. Fue realizada revisión integrativa, en las bases: Literatura Latinoamericana y de Caribe en Ciencias de la Salud (LILACS), *Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System On-Line* (MEDLINE) y *National Library of Medicine* en la base PUBMED. Fueron seleccionados artículos publicados de 2002 a julio de 2014 que abordasen el Grupo Operativo propuesto por Pichon-Rivière. Fueron hallados 23 artículos discutidos en las categorías: Grupo Operativo en la Atención a la Salud de las Personas; Grupo Operativo en el Proceso Enseñanza-Aprendizaje del Profesional; Uso del Grupo Operativo en la Gestión de Servicios en Salud; Grupo Operativo en la Investigación en Salud. El Grupo Operativo es adoptado en la atención a la salud en enfermedades crónicas, investigación, gestión y formación de trabajadores de salud. Se concluye que esa herramienta es relevante para el cuidado y que son necesarias investigaciones con otros métodos.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Procesos grupales; Salud; Literatura de revisión como asunto; Asistencia a la salud.

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INTRODUCTION

Among health demands, group activities are configured as a technology stipulated in the Brazilian National Health System⁽¹⁾. Some researchers indicate them as effective strategies for promoting health, encouraging changes, and improving peoples' quality of life⁽²⁻⁴⁾.

Due to their broad application in the health field, group activities can constitute an important ally for the health professional, mainly because they allow the use of the potential for helping people who live with similar problems or situations^(1,5). As a result, it is essential to study this issue, considering the advice that the operative group is a theoretical-technical framework in the constitution of genuinely efficacious practice⁽⁶⁾.

In the case of the present study, the technique of the Operative Group (OG) as proposed by the psychoanalyst Pichon-Rivière was selected as the focus of interest. The basics of OG are based in the dynamic and dialectic relationship between subject and object, with the learning as the central therapeutic factor. Learning is understood as an ongoing process which results from the person's relationship with the other and with the environment⁽⁷⁾. To this end, the OG invests in the critical reading of the context and the relationships, which are essential conditions for investigative attitudes and which mobilize change⁽⁵⁾.

The proposal of OG as a group framework also makes the collective construction of projects possible, the fruit of dialogue and of listening in the group space, in search of the undertaking of the common task between the participants⁽²⁾. From this perspective, the OG – which historically was projected in the area of mental health⁽⁷⁾ – has gained space in other areas of peoples' health care, for example, in conducting processes of changes in living habits among those who live with chronic illnesses^(4,8-9).

Although the literature indicates the use of OG in the context of health actions, it is fundamental to investigate in which aspects it has most commonly been used, which results it has brought, and what its impacts have been in these actions. Thus, the relevancy of analyzing the production on the use of OG in the search for the proposing of assertive practices in the health area, and in the contribution to future investigations, is justified. As a result, this investigation's objective

was to investigate how OG has been used, and what the best evidence is of its use, produced in the scientific literature.

METHOD

For the study, the integrative review (IR) was used as the study method, allowing the summarizing of the condition of the knowledge of the state-of-the-art of the topic of interest. The IR is made up of six stages: identification of the issue, selection of the research hypothesis or question; establishment of criteria for including or excluding studies/sampling; defining of the information to be extracted from the studies selected; evaluation of the studies included; interpretation of the results, and presentation of the review/summary of the knowledge⁽¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾.

Considering that OG is a tool used in peoples' learning and therapeutic process, a guiding question was elaborated for the study: What evidence is produced through the use of the technique of OG in healthcare?

In order to undertake the review, the following databases were selected: Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Science Information (LILACS), Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System On-Line (MEDLINE) and National Library of Medicine - National Institutes of Health (NLM-NIH) containing the PUBMED database. The study took place between the months of July and August 2014, with a combined collection in each database, by two independent researchers.

In the databases, the following controlled descriptors were used: "processos grupais OR group processes OR procesos de grupo AND saúde OR health OR salud". The following non-controlled descriptors were also used: "grupo operativo AND saúde OR health OR salud", taking into account that the term "Operative Group" is not on the list of controlled descriptors 'Descriptors in Health Sciences' (DeCS) of the Virtual Health Library (BVS)/Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), allowing the capture of a larger number of articles for the investigation.

Complete texts, published between 2002 and July 2014, in the English, Spanish or Portuguese languages were included. The texts were to address the OG work methodology as proposed by Pichon-Rivière⁽⁷⁾, with the use of references

from the literature (academic/scientific) which supported the technique, and with indication of application to a specific group, as well as indication of practical results. Theoretical reflection, updating or review studies, and theses and dissertations, were excluded.

With a view to increasing the reliability of the information in the databases, a manual search was made of articles available (hand-searching), guided by the references of the scientific productions already collected. The results of the selection are shown in Figure 1.

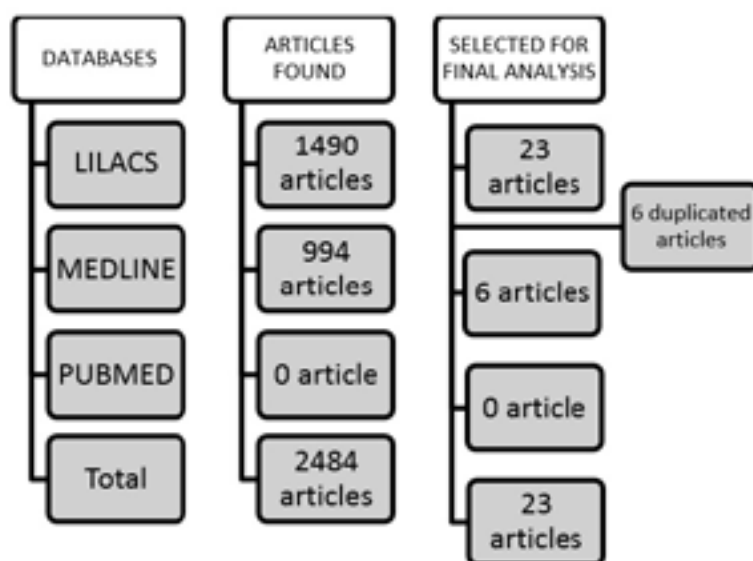


Figure 1 - Flowchart of data collection for the Integrative Review on Operative Groups in healthcare. Goiás, Brazil, 2014

The analysis of the data derived from the articles included was mediated by a data collection script focusing on the study objective and on the results found. Also considered, in the analysis of the studies, was the level of evidence, with the hierarchical classification proposed by Melnyk and Fineout-Overholt⁽¹²⁾: level I for evidence obtained from the result of meta-analysis of controlled clinical trials, and with randomization; level II for randomized, controlled and defined studies; level III for well-defined clinical trials without randomization; level IV for case-control or cohort studies; level V for systematic reviews and descriptive and qualitative studies; level VI for evidence originating from a single descriptive or qualitative study; level VII for evidence based in specialists' opinions or based in norms or legislation.

RESULTS

Based on the process of analysis of the 23 articles included in the study, the production was systematized through a summary table (Table 1).

In relation to what is shown in Table 1, emphasis is placed on the articles' years of publication: 2010 (five), 2007 (four) and 2012 (four). No articles were

published in the first semester of 2014. The database with the highest prevalence was LILACS, evidencing the Latin American production regarding this issue. There were publications in Brazilian, Mexican and Cuban journals, in relation to the areas of knowledge in the health context. The area with the greatest prevalence was Nursing (n=12), followed by collective health (five).

In relation to the analysis of the level of evidence, it was identified that the highest number of original articles was at level V, (n=18), with presentation of evidence from qualitative or descriptive studies, with particular emphasis for the research-action or interventional methodology. From the process of analysis of the scientific productions, guided by the study objective, four categories emerged: the Operative Group in Peoples' Health Care; the Operative Group in the Professional's Teaching-Learning Process; Use of the Operative Group in the Management of Health Services; and the Operative Group in Health Research.

Table 1 - Summary of the scientific production on the use of the Operative Group in healthcare. Goiás, Brazil, 2014

Journal/Year/Source	Source	Objective	Results with OG
Cardoso e Dall'Agnol(2)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Analyze the group process of a nursing team at the Teaching Hospital of Porto Alegre	Team learns and is able to identify the main indicators of the group process, it becomes possible to improve operatively
Grando e Dall'Agnol(3)	LILACS	Analyze the meetings of a Family Health Team, through observation and focus groups	Addressed the «perfect team» of the team's imaginary and what hinders the confronting of the conflicts
Almeida e Soares(4)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Address the OG as a learning and transformation space, and reflect on the learning of the person with diabetes	Conquest of more autonomy in the care and management of diabetes with the change of habits
Soares e Ferraz(8)	LILACS	Analyze the application of the theory and methodology of OG in groups of persons with diabetes mellitus	OG: better facing of affective issues and learning of the disease's dimensions
Torres et al.(9)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Encourage the individual to reflect on their routine lifestyle related to the diabetes	Encourage the interpersonal relationship between the diabetics and the health professionals. Exchanging of information and adoption of healthy practices
Lucchese et al.(14)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Discussed the use of the OG technology as a coping strategy for tobacco use within the Smoking Control Program	Change of behavior, better adherence to treatment
Cassol et al.(15)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Described the perception of users of alcohol and other drugs regarding the treatment, in an OG geared towards teaching-learning in health	Support for maintaining oneself in abstinence, space for dialogue, learning, and as the person responsible for victories achieved in the struggle against consumption of drugs
Pedroni et al.(16)	LILACS	Characterize the care received from the Nursing Team for the older adult with arterial hypertension	Change in eating habits
Favoreto e Cabral(17)	LILACS	Observe whether the people, based in a dialogic experience, extend the meanings of the health-illness process	Promotion of dialogue and reflection with integration of social and cultural aspects of their lives and illness
Botelho et al.(18)	LILACS	Evaluate the learning and perceptions of students participating in an OG which aimed for the promotion of healthy eating	Positive responses in relation to the activities undertaken and establishment of the interventions on the part of the children, even after the OG is finished
Figuroa et al.(19)	LILACS	Undertake an appropriate reading of what occurs in a community group during the undertaking of an educational project on nutrition	Develop a participative dynamic and abandonment of the individual perspective and start of a collective focus on the work
Murakami et al.(20)	LILACS	Describe and analyze the group intervention regarding sexuality and STD/AIDS with female adolescents	Better articulation between thinking, feeling and acting for a healthy adolescence in relation to sexuality and prevention of STD

Colosio et al.(21)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Investigate the effects of adopting an intervention procedure in OG in work preventing infection by HIV	Intervention group: reduction of the practice of unprotected anal sex; increase of the number of favorable responses to the prevention. Safer sexual habits
Peres e Figueiredo(22)	LILACS	Identify the consequences of the work undertaken by the OG with clients who used prolonged action neuroleptics	Active participation of the psychiatric client; establishment of links and improvement in the treatment
Gatti e Andréa(23)	LILACS	Reflect on the work with an OG with adolescent mothers at risk of sexual exploitation	Partially restore the self-confidence and hope such that they may face the transformations of life and the day-to-day
Macêdo e Andrade(24)	LILACS	Analyze the participation of children in workshops of the Ação Grão initiative	The workshops promote self-care and the discovery of abilities, as well as the construction of subjectivity
Hur et al.(25)	LILACS	Present and discuss the experience of a course, titled: Group psychoanalysis: theory and technique	Significant change relating to the reduction of anxieties and to implications for the elaboration of the learning
Lucchese e Barros(26)	LILACS/ MEDLINE	Offer a space for the experiential expression of the student of Nursing	The continent space of the students' experiences in their training process
Correa et al.(27)	LILACS	Analyze the use of OG as a space for the exchanging of experiences among Nursing students	Putting into effect the exchanging of experiences among the students in coping with the transition to professional life
Oliveira e Ciampone(28)	LILACS	Identify the perceptions which the students of Nursing have in relation to quality of life	Dialectic situations in relation to the promotion of quality of life of students promoted the students' quality of life
Gama e Koda(30)	LILACS	Promote intervention and community psychological analysis in a solid waste recycling cooperative	OG provided opportunities for greater participation of its members and the construction of the figure of an environmental agent, in substitution for identification with garbage
Böck et al.(32)	LILACS	Put into action and systematize the social and affective support for the professors, considering the proposal for remission of burnout	Increase of the level of burnout in the following dimensions: emotional exhaustion, professional actualization and depersonalization in the experimental group. Improvement in the strategies for coping with professional exhaustion
Pereira et al.(33)	LILACS	Report the experience of (re) construction of the family planning group in a Primary Healthcare Center	OG allowed dialogic interrelationship between the actors involved, and democratic participative construction regarding family planning

DISCUSSION

Among the productions studied, emphasis is placed on the use of OG in the practice of Nursing, with the most scientific production identified in this IR. This fact may be explained by these professionals' identification with the pichonian assumption, besides the relevant tool for the improvement of the care. The growing interest in the issue of groups in Nursing also occurs due to their application as a leadership strategy for care for the human being, in teaching and in research, among others^(2,8). It is argued that the development of group technology, in care for people, also contributes to the nurse's maturing itself⁽¹³⁾.

The area of collective health also represents a significant field in the dissemination of the production of knowledge through the OG, with the participation of psychologists, nurses, nutritionists, physicians and educators. This may be a response to the area's demands, as it is in this context that collective actions are required more, and impress upon the health professional a constant «make groups», whether in attending the complexities of management, or the health needs⁽¹⁾. For this last, the use of OG afforded an intervention considering the dialectical relationship of the individual with the environment in which he lives, in a collective environment, thus potentializing a change of habits and promotion of health⁽²⁾.

In relation to the multiplicity of the use of OG in the area of peoples' health, the variety of scenarios in which this technique was applied is ascertained. Among these, hospitals, outpatient centers, Primary Healthcare, work environments, and higher education and primary/junior/senior school teaching institutions are included.

In relation to the level of evidence⁽¹²⁾ of the articles included, the results – with predominance of level V, that is, descriptive and qualitative studies – indicated that the development of projects with more robust methodological outlines for the study of group interventions is fundamental – in particular, those which privilege the systematized evaluation of these interventions' impact.

The Operative Group in Peoples' Health Care

In relation to peoples' health care, OG was applied with the aim of promoting learning, identifying difficulties, discussing abilities and

finding appropriate solutions for the latent problems in their living conditions⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁾. Considering the service users who participate in the OG, the task of the group is to learn to coexist with a chronic disease such as diabetes mellitus and systemic arterial hypertension (SAH); to develop autonomy and self-care; and to adhere to the treatment^(4,9,16), in confronting the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, for example⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁾. To this end, OG may be articulated with educational games which intensify exchanges of knowledge⁽⁹⁾.

The use of group activities in the care for people promotes the effectiveness of the objectives in relation to health care⁽¹⁷⁾, such as healthy eating habits⁽¹⁸⁾. In this regard, the joint work affords the exchange of ideas and experiences between the participants, particularly with the use of dynamic strategies. In this period, the school is an appropriate place for undertaking OG with children, as it is an environment specifically for teaching⁽¹⁸⁾.

OG also synchronizes with a participative methodology in the construction of a collective nutritional project. With the purpose of health education, activities are needed in which the community participates, and in which it can identify the problems, formulate preventive actions, carry out tasks and evaluate the objectives achieved. The purpose is the co-responsibility in relation to the problems, promoting the educational process in the group, through the exploration of their way of being, of the context experienced, of the uncertainties, of their thoughts and of their expectations⁽¹⁹⁾.

Among the specific groups in which OG was used, emphasis is placed on the group of adolescents in the addressing of family planning, health promotion, and prevention of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)⁽²⁰⁾, as well as in the prevention of HIV/AIDS among men who have sex with men⁽²¹⁾. In both the studies, the vision regarding the issue was broadened, and more effective responses were found for preventing infections.

In the specialty area of Psychiatry, OG was shown to be an important instrument of care for the patients who use neuroleptics. In addressing the dimension of the people's routine, OG provides an opportunity for talking and for listening, with affective exchanges and social exchanges which privilege the group task⁽²²⁾. Also in relation to the promotion of mental health,

OG was shown to be a means for confronting situations of risk for the vulnerable population, in particular, violence and poverty⁽²³⁻²⁴⁾.

The Operative Group in the Professional's Teaching-Learning Process

Through the OG, there are possibilities for students and educators to develop abilities in criticism, dialogue, and understanding, for maturing personally and as a group⁽²⁵⁻²⁶⁾, conditions which promote the confronting of situations of appropriation of a profession, in the finalizing of the undergraduate course in Nursing⁽²⁶⁻²⁷⁾.

In another study on the teaching-learning process of the undergraduate Nursing student, the OG was shown to be receptive to the feelings awoken in the student during the training. In some cases, this affectivity mobilized is of distress, fear and insecurity relating to the overload of the practice of a professional who deals with life, which can bring negative consequences for the future professional, if there are no tools for this embracement. OG was an assertive instrument for such times⁽²⁶⁻²⁸⁾.

One of the proposals of OG is that the subject can broaden her vision of the collectivity, begin to belong to a specific group and extend the understanding of the insertion of people in a group. The classroom was shown to be an environment which was supportive to the learning of various subjects, particularly in the undergraduate Nursing course, bearing in mind that these become future critical and autonomous professionals and citizens^(3,28).

Use of the Operative Group in the Management of Health Services

The knowledge of the OG technology was also applied in the reading of the dynamic of the functioning of health teams. From the understanding of the group work, with its routine relationships and its conflicts, emerged challenging questions, such as the sharing of a common objective for collective actions, and the development of mutual respect. These questions are evident among the Nursing workers who, by nature, act as a group. Thus, group conceptions

must permeate their professional life⁽²⁾.

The analysis of teams, such as that of the Family Health Program, in the light of pichonian thinking, allowed the approaching of their essential intention, which is that of innovating the form of the individuals' health care, with the mission of overcoming actions which do not have resolute capacity, such as receiving prescriptions for medications and recommendations for changing habits. To this end, it is considered respectable for the team to be trained through techniques of OG, allowing transformations and developments, as, in the group, the team members think together regarding aspects which need to be improved, whether in how they work or how they relate to each other⁽²⁹⁾.

The knowledge produced through the application of OG also allows the analysis of the Family Health Team, which is organized around an idealized "perfect team", in which polemic discussions are avoided when the conflict is perceived as threatening to the group's integrity. The reading of this context, through OG, indicated the team's weakness in managing conflicts, and also revealed its potential in elaborating projects, regarding routine problems⁽³⁾. The virtuosity of OG in the management of teams, therefore, was perceived.

In addition, the work of OG addressed professionals of a solid waste recycling cooperative, affording interaction between the participants, reinforcing trust in an environment previously permeated by mistrust. As a result, the groups served for the members to overcome resistance in relation to their co-workers, as all had the right to speak during the group meetings⁽³⁰⁾.

The Operative Group in Health Research

Through the production of knowledge from the IR, it is observed that the group was applied in the studies with distinct purposes, such as intervening in the study population⁽³⁰⁻³³⁾, as a technique for obtaining empirical data⁽²⁸⁾ or in reading and conducting analysis of a given context⁽³⁾. In this regard, the application of OG, in health research, guides the study from data collection through to the analysis of this, with, however, a theoretical framework for inference and discussion. OG can support the interpretation

of the context, as well as to have tools which are inherent to it, such as the recording of reports, the mediation of the group's dynamic with the coordinator and observer, and the group times such as feedback, starting, development and closing⁽³¹⁾.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

OG has been used and indicated in the area of health as a relevant scientific production in a search period of little over a decade. The nurses were the professionals who published most, confirming the identity which the profession has with the technology and the interest in appropriating frameworks which support the care. In relation to the population worked upon in the studies, there was variety in relation to: phases of the lifecycle, gender, sexual orientation, specific groupings in accordance with pathology, Nursing workers (health), undergraduate students in health and educators of undergraduate students.

At the same time, the use of OG in health education was emphasized in this IR. It was frequently associated with didactic-pedagogical frameworks in processes of teaching-learning, such as constructivism, or in interactive didactic practices, inherent to the active pedagogies.

The understanding and interventions in the work relationships through OG, whether in a health team or for health professionals, allowed the approaching of difficulties, indicating conflictual factors to be managed. These actions provided opportunities for elaborating projects, understood as a qualitative leap in the teams' dynamics, evidencing the use of OG in management with people.

It is beyond doubt that the evidence from the studies analyzed confirms a characteristic of OG as a learning group. However, it points to the therapeutic gains which are achieved through this technology, whether in education or in the training of professionals, or in peoples' healthcare.

It is important to emphasize that the articles included in this IR corroborate the use of OG in varying research possibilities. Furthermore, the fact that the studies analyzed were mainly qualitative and descriptive studies suggests studies with methodological outlines which are better classified hierarchically, according to the levels

of evidence. Nevertheless, the studies researched addressed a complex and promising study object, constituting significant sources of knowledge for future studies. As a limit of the IR, one can mention the non-indexing of the term "Operative Group" in scientific databases, which hindered a direct search for the production.

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