



Care for older adults in times of pandemic

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges that have impacted direct care to people at all levels of health care. Among these challenges is the redefinition of care for older adults. The development of the capacity for self-care has emerged as fundamental in these times of pandemic.

In the aging process, self-care can be characterized by the actions that people perform in their daily lives to prevent, control or reduce the impact of chronic conditions on their own health¹. While health team interventions to help people qualify this process are characterized as supported self-care.²

The capacity to understand the actions required to maintain health and the ability to persist with healthy behaviors are aspects that influence health behavior. During the pandemic, we learned that programs aimed at the care and health promotion of individual older adults should offer self-care support systems that include educational and rehabilitation actions, so that even older adults with some degree of dependence have the opportunity to strengthen their intrinsic functional capacity.³ Programs aimed at promoting intrinsic capacity should strengthen these individuals' self-concept, self-efficacy and control over their own lives. In addition, such programs should promote good family relationships and social support.

For an independent life in old age, material resources and social support services are required. Gabardo-Martins *et al.*⁴ indicate that one of the most important dimensions of social support is access to information, so that people are able to solve their problems autonomously. However, older adults must have the ability to give and receive affection, to develop empathy and to trust other people. Thus, Gabardo-Martins *et al.*⁴ also reinforce the importance of relationships capable of helping the person to assess how they conduct their own life. When older adults have access to social support with such qualities, they will maintain the feeling of belonging and self-care, even during periods of social distancing. In this case, social distancing will not mean social isolation.³

In addition to aspects related to supported self-care and social support, care for older adults involves several issues that became more evident with the emergence of the pandemic. In order to face such challenges, reflection based on science is necessary and urgent, since actions without adequate scientific depth often result in irrational empiricism.

This thematic issue of RBGG is expected to contribute to the care of older adults in times of pandemic. The intention is to discuss and propose solutions that minimize the impacts of the pandemic on the quality of life and health of the older adult population, based on scientific knowledge.

Thus, the scope of this thematic edition encourages articles that address:

- The demands of care for older adults in different contexts (long-stay institutions; the home; hospital; primary health care) in times of pandemic;
- The organization of the health service network for these new demands;
- Possible responses to the challenge of meeting these demands;
- The mental health of older adults in a context of social distance;
- The impact of social inequalities in the care of older adults in times of pandemic;
- The training of caregivers and family members of older adults for this new reality.

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