


**THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN NURSING  
EDUCATION: A REPORT OF AN INTERNSHIP IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE**

**A IMPORTÂNCIA DA INTEGRAÇÃO TEÓRICO-PRÁTICA NA FORMAÇÃO DE  
ENFERMEIROS: RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA EM ESTÁGIO NA APS**

**LA IMPORTANCIA DE INTEGRAR LA TEORÍA Y LA PRÁCTICA EN LA  
FORMACIÓN EN ENFERMERÍA: INFORME DE UNA PASANTÍA EN ATENCIÓN  
PRIMARIA DE SALUD**

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**Maria Clara Oliveira Melo<sup>1</sup>, Ana Laura Teodoro Azevedo<sup>2</sup>, Maria Júlia Mendes de  
Melo<sup>3</sup>, Thainá Mendes Faria<sup>4</sup>, Carla Denari Giuliani<sup>5</sup>**

**ABSTRACT**

This experience report presents the experiences of a group of six fourth-semester nursing students from the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) during their supervised internship in Primary Health Care (PHC). The experience highlights the importance of integrating theory and practice in professional training, addressing the learning and challenges faced by the students. The activities involved accompanying nursing consultations, preventive examinations, vaccinations, child care, and home visits with Community Health Agents (CHAs). This experience allowed students a broader understanding of the nurse's role in care management, health promotion, and teamwork, in addition to strengthening technical, ethical, and communication skills. Among the challenges, the limited internship time, the lack of institutional support, and the conditions of social vulnerability in the territory stood out. Thus, it is clear that supervised practice plays a fundamental role in building the generalist and humanist profile proposed by the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs), contributing to a critical, reflective, and socially committed education.

**Keywords:** Academic Experience. Curriculum Integration. Competency Development. Primary Health Care (PHC).

**RESUMO**

O presente relato de experiência apresenta a vivência de um grupo de seis acadêmicos do quarto período do curso de Enfermagem da Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) durante o estágio supervisionado na Atenção Primária à Saúde (APS). A experiência destaca a importância da integração entre teoria e prática na formação profissional, abordando os aprendizados e desafios enfrentados pelos estudantes. As atividades desenvolvidas envolveram o acompanhamento de consultas de enfermagem, exames preventivos, vacinação, puericultura e visitas domiciliares junto aos Agentes Comunitários de Saúde (ACS). Essa vivência permitiu aos discentes uma compreensão ampliada sobre o papel do enfermeiro na gestão do cuidado, na promoção da saúde e no trabalho em equipe, além de

<sup>1</sup> Undergraduate student in Nursing. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. Lattes: 7947176993224424

<sup>2</sup> Undergraduate student in Nursing. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. Lattes: 2709449349362000

<sup>3</sup> Undergraduate student in Nursing. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. Lattes: 9911462506556021

<sup>4</sup> Undergraduate student in Nursing. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. Lattes: 7383104317736900

<sup>5</sup> Dr. in History and Culture. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. Lattes: 0924515986721388

fortalecer habilidades técnicas, éticas e de comunicação. Entre os desafios, destacaram-se o tempo limitado de estágio, a falta de suporte institucional e as condições de vulnerabilidade social do território. Dessa forma, percebe-se que a prática supervisionada tem um papel fundamental na construção do perfil generalista e humanista proposto pelas Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais (DCNs), contribuindo para uma formação crítica, reflexiva e socialmente comprometida.

**Palavras-chave:** Vivência Acadêmica. Integração Curricular. Desenvolvimento de Competências. Atenção Primária à Saúde (APS).

## RESUMEN

Este informe de experiencia presenta las vivencias de un grupo de seis estudiantes de cuarto semestre de enfermería de la Universidad Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) durante su pasantía supervisada en Atención Primaria de Salud (APS). La experiencia destaca la importancia de integrar teoría y práctica en la formación profesional, abordando el aprendizaje y los retos que enfrentaron los estudiantes. Las actividades incluyeron el acompañamiento en consultas de enfermería, exámenes preventivos, vacunaciones, cuidado infantil y visitas domiciliarias con Agentes Comunitarios de Salud (ACS). Esta experiencia permitió a los estudiantes comprender mejor el rol de la enfermera en la gestión de cuidados, la promoción de la salud y el trabajo en equipo, además de fortalecer sus habilidades técnicas, éticas y de comunicación. Entre los retos, destacaron el tiempo limitado de la pasantía, la falta de apoyo institucional y las condiciones de vulnerabilidad social en el territorio. Así, queda claro que la práctica supervisada desempeña un papel fundamental en la construcción del perfil generalista y humanista propuesto por las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales (DCN), contribuyendo a una educación crítica, reflexiva y socialmente comprometida.

**Palabras clave:** Experiencia Académica. Integración Curricular. Desarrollo de Competencias. Atención Primaria de Salud (APS).

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) of the Nursing course perform the function of ensuring a national standard of quality, establishing a common base guided by the principles of the Unified Health System (SUS). In addition, they give flexibility to Educational Institutions (HEIs) for the contextualization of their Pedagogical Course Projects (PPCs), allowing them to adapt to regional specificities and their institutional identities.

As of the date of this report, the 2024 National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) are the current regulatory framework for the bachelor's degree course in Nursing. This instrument defines, as the purpose of training, the development of a professional with a "generalist, humanistic, critical, reflective and ethical-legal" profile (BRASIL, 2024), in parallel with encouraging training in a "multiprofessional and interdisciplinary" environment (BRASIL, 2024). Such foundations confer theoretical and practical solidity to academic development. This last aspect, in particular, was intensely experienced in the educational practice offered by the Federal University, materialized through the internship in a Basic Health Unit (UBS) - a scenario that, by its very nature, materializes the principle of the DCNs of an undergraduate course based on the SUS.

As provided for in Article 11, Primary Health Care (PHC) is designated as the coordinator of care and the organizer of the Health Care Networks (RAS) (BRASIL, 2024). This role dates back to the Alma-Ata International Conference (WHO, 1978), a historical milestone in which PHC was established as the preferred gateway to health systems and a fundamental element for the continuity of care (SALTMAN, 2006). In view of this structure, the student's immersion in the real scenario of the SUS, particularly at the entrance to the system, is consolidated as essential for the development of the competencies inherent to nurses, preparing them to act as unit managers and central figures in family and community care.

In this context, the discussion about the moment and the way in which the student should be inserted in this scenario gains relevance, especially when it is considered that early and supervised practice can favor the consolidation of knowledge and the development of professional autonomy. The literature corroborates the premise of early practical immersion, but also presents it as a complex process, whose results must be analyzed beyond the numbers. The study by Yazdi (2025) demonstrated tangible gains with Early Clinical Exposure (ECE), but noted that the improvement in specific communicative competencies did not reach the expected significance in certain contexts. The authors themselves attribute this fact to

limiting environmental variables, such as the presence of family members or the overcrowding of spaces, which may have impaired the focus and performance of students during interaction. This data, far from invalidating ECE, deepens its understanding: it aligns with findings such as those of Eren and Turkmen (2021), who reported elevated levels of stress in first-year students during patient interviews. The "fear" and anxiety inherent in the initial contact with the clinical reality do not represent a failure of the methodology, but rather an aspect of learning that requires structured support. This finding reinforces that practical immersion needs to be intentionally planned, with adequate supervision and environments that favor progressive development. In this way, it is possible to build the student's emotional security in parallel with the development of their technical skills.

In view of this scenario, it is non-negotiable that the undergraduate nursing curriculum includes continuous and pedagogically planned practical experiences throughout the education. The progressive insertion of students in Primary Health Care (PHC), in a way that is compatible with their level of knowledge, favors the gradual development of clinical, relational and managerial skills. The present experience report emerges, therefore, as an expression of a remarkable learning, which evidenced the transformative potential of the experience in PHC and, simultaneously, the lack of similar opportunities in previous stages of the course. By highlighting this experience, it is intended to contribute to the reflection on the need to restructure the Pedagogical Project of the Course, so that the practice in Primary Care is valued from the initial periods as an essential axis of nursing education.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The present work is characterized as descriptive and qualitative in the experience report model. It addresses the experience carried out in a Basic Family Health Unit (UBSF) in the city of Uberlândia – MG, by a group of 6 students from the 4th period of the undergraduate Nursing course at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), in the discipline of Collective Health IV.

The practice at UBSF took place on 08/05/2025 and 08/06/2025 from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm, by the group of 6 students, accompanied by the teacher in charge. Regarding practice, the students were separated and sent to accompany a nursing professional, while a pair was responsible for accompanying the Community Health Agents (CHA) in their home visits.

Based on this, those who accompanied the nurses in the health unit observed cases of nursing consultations, preventive exams in women, heel prick tests, childcare and other

procedures, while those who accompanied the CHAs observed searches, registration and home visits.

Therefore, with the purpose of strengthening and defending the importance of practice in the undergraduate nursing course, bibliographic references were searched on the PubMed, Google Scholar, Scielo, Capes Portal, Virtual Health Library (VHL) and resolutions of the Federal Nursing Council (Cofen) platforms. Thus, for the present work, 8 articles from the PubMed, Google Scholar, Virtual Health Library (VHL) and Cofen platforms were used.

### 3 DISCUSSION

The supervised experience in the discipline of Collective Health IV, developed in two days, in the afternoon, at UBSF Glória, linked to the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), transcended the character of observation, representing in practice the concrete application of the fundamentals of the SUS in Primary Health Care (PHC). The activities involved the monitoring of gynecological consultations, screening, vaccinations, heel prick testing and childcare, composing a scenario in which individual care proved to be inseparable from collective health responsibility - a principle that has guided the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) since 2001 and the very logic of organization of PHC (WHO, 1978; SALTMAN, 2006).

The experience allowed a critical understanding of the structuring elements of the work process in the Unit, as proposed in the objectives of the discipline (BRASIL, 2018). An organized scheduling flow and the presence of medical specialists on a weekly basis were observed, although without the figure of some nursing specialties - an absence that aroused reflection on the underuse of nursing in specialty practices in the scope of primary care. Positively, the multiprofessional team presented an integrated and cooperative dynamic, with well-defined roles and effective communication between doctors, nurses, technicians and community health agents, in line with what (ESTEVES, et al., 2018) point out as essential to the consolidation of interdisciplinary practice.

The observation of the use of the e-SUS system evidenced the role of nurses in the management of health information, allowing us to understand how data guide the planning and monitoring of established goals. This administrative dimension, still little explored in previous undergraduate periods, revealed the complexity of nurses' work in PHC, which articulates care, surveillance, and management (LIMA, et al., 2016).

During the home visits, carried out with the CHAs, learning reached its greatest formative depth. The insertion in the territory of Glória, characterized by social vulnerability,

history of occupation and marked state invisibility, made it possible to recognize the social determinants of health as conditioning factors of the health-disease process, especially with regard to teenage pregnancy and low adherence to contraceptive methods. This reality reinforced the understanding that nursing practice in PHC demands socio-community engagement and the ability to articulate politically, going beyond the technical dimension of care.

Among the challenges experienced, the commute to UBSF Glória was a significant limitation. The journey, which lasted approximately one hour and without institutional support, evidenced the personal cost involved in nursing education. Despite the discomfort, arriving at the unit and contacting the community represented a rewarding counterpoint, reaffirming the social meaning of care. The security dimension, in turn, was also sensitive: the presence of armed groups in the vicinity of the region, although respectful of health professionals, exposed the vulnerability to which the student - and in the future the nurse - is subjected. The fact that the University does not offer logistical support or safety guidelines highlights a gap in institutional care aimed at protecting students in the field. Such absence, even if understood within the structural limitations of public education, ends up reproducing, since graduation, the negligence that later manifests itself in labor violence against nurses in various care contexts.

Another limiting point was the reduced workload, the result of unforeseen events that culminated in the loss of one of the three days of field, without the occurrence of replacement. The brevity of the discipline partially restricted the immersion and deepening of learning about the territory and the work process in PHC. In addition, the occasional absence of direct supervision during the experience was perceived positively, as it allows greater autonomy and interaction with the multiprofessional team - an essential element for the development of self-confidence and teaching-service integration. Such challenges reveal, however, how much Nursing, even in the face of occasional adversities, tends to normalize certain weaknesses in education in the name of resilience and vocation. This attitude, often romanticized as an expression of altruism, ends up reinforcing the idea that permissiveness is an expected attribute of the profession, while other areas of health demand more equitable teaching and working conditions (ESTEVEZ, et al., 2018).

The experience, although brief, favored the development of communicative and relational skills, confirming what Yazdi (2025) points out about the gains of supervised practical exposure. However, the short duration of the experience and its realization only in a

more advanced period of the course exposed the lack of early practices that sustain continuous learning. As Eren and Turkmen (2021) observe, the limitation of practical opportunities during graduation can generate insecurity and anxiety in students, making it difficult to consolidate professional autonomy. This finding reinforces the need for a curricular review that ensures progressive experiences in PHC, adjusted to the student's level of education, in order to balance theory and practice and strengthen the nurse's professional identity.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The present report aimed to describe the experiences observed by students in the fourth period of the undergraduate program at UFU during the supervised internship in Primary Health Care (PHC) and to contribute to the reflection on the need to remodel the Pedagogical Project of the Course, so that the practice in Primary Care is valued from the first periods as one of the great and important areas of nurses' activity.

The experience provided the improvement of technical, ethical and interpersonal skills. The experience allowed a greater knowledge of the role of nurses in PHC, their management functions, health education, surveillance and nursing care in the face of the demands of the community. In view of this, the great relevance of practical activities for the comprehensive education of nursing professionals is observed.

Among the main challenges and limitations faced during the supervised internship are local vulnerability, due to the insecurity present in the visited neighborhood; in addition to the reduced workload that led to the loss of one of the days of practice that could be experienced by the students.

In view of this internship, the students identified the great relevance of practical activities for nursing education, which are often not promoted to the students in a satisfactory way. The experience revealed, therefore, the need for greater appreciation and expansion of supervised practices during the training, with a progressive and constant exposure that accompanies the knowledge acquired at each moment of graduation in order to strengthen the learning and skills of the nurse as a transforming agent of care and promoter of public health.

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