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The Importance of Nurses in Risk Classification in Emergencies in Brazil: A Literature Review (2019–2024)

The Importance Of The Nurse In Risk Classification In Emergency Services In Brazil: A Literature Review (2019–2024)

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Abstract:

Risk classification in emergency services is an essential process aimed at organizing care according to the clinical severity of patients, allowing for a rapid and effective response. This qualitative, descriptive-exploratory study was conducted through a literature review using databases such as BDEFN, LILACS, and SCIELO, with publications between 2019 and 2024. Its objective was to analyze the importance of the nurse's role in the risk classification process in emergency services in Brazil, highlighting their contribution to the organization of care, patient safety, and the quality of assistance provided. The results reinforce the centrality of the nurse in the application of triage protocols, such as the Manchester Protocol, highlighting the relevance of their technical training, clinical decision-making, and listening skills. Furthermore, the study highlighted the need for continuous training and addressing structural challenges, such as work overload and limitations in human and material resources, which frequently hinder the effective implementation of training.

Keywords: Patient safety, Manchester protocol.

Abstract

Risk classification in emergency services is an essential process that aims to organize care according to the clinical severity of patients, enabling a rapid and effective response. This qualitative, descriptive-exploratory study was conducted through a literature review using databases such as BDEFN, LILACS, and SCIELO, with publications published between 2019 and 2024. It aimed to analyze the importance of nurses' role in the risk classification process in emergency services in Brazil, highlighting their contribution to care organization, patient safety, and the quality of care provided. The results reinforce the central role of nurses in the application of triage protocols, such as the Manchester Protocol, highlighting the relevance of their technical training, clinical decision-making, and qualified listening skills. Furthermore, the study highlighted the need for ongoing training and addressing structural challenges, such as work overload and limited human and material resources, which often hinder effective triage.

Keywords: Patient safety, Manchester Protocol.

1. INTRODUCTION

Risk classification (RC) is an essential process for organizing demand in emergency and urgent care services, allowing for the identification of the most serious clinical conditions and to ensure prioritized service. In Brazil, this process was consolidated with the implementation of updated reception and clinical triage strategies, as reinforced in technical reports.



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and post-pandemic guidelines, such as documents produced by Anvisa and the Ministry of Health between 2020 and 2023, which highlight the importance of rapid response and team qualification. nursing and safe case prioritization (BRAZIL, 2023).

One of the key points in risk classification is the reception of the user in the service. urgency and emergency, since it is an essential action for an effective assessment of patient. The National Humanization Policy (PNH) understands this as a... The user's reception upon arrival, responsibility for their comprehensive care, as well as... a decisive approach (Duarte *et al.*, 2023).

Therefore, the nurse is essential in risk classification in emergency services, since that their role is highly relevant because it goes beyond simply collecting bureaucratic results. The decision decision-making, monitoring, problem-solving, equity, medical history, clinical examination and Physical therapy, individualized prioritization of each patient, are all nursing tools that These can be assigned to each person according to different situations in the correct classification for to make the service flow progressive and continuous (Aguiar *et al.*, 2022).

In this sense, the nursing professional, due to their legal responsibilities and clinical competencies, is responsible for applying risk classification protocols at the entry points of Emergency and urgent care services. Quick and safe decision-making by the nurse can to directly influence clinical outcomes, preventing complications and reducing waiting times. of patients in critical situations (Silva *et al.*, 2021).

The Manchester protocol is commonly used in Brazil, structured by flowcharts that... These represent the complaints presented by those seeking emergency services. The patient may be classified into one of five different priority levels: emergency with the color red. with a waiting time of zero minutes, very urgent in orange with a waiting time of up to ten minutes, urgent (yellow color) with a maximum waiting time of up to sixty minutes. Low urgency (green) with a waiting time of up to one hundred and twenty minutes and non-urgent (of blue color with a waiting time of up to two hundred and forty minutes (Pacera *et al.*, 2021).

Nurses who perform this classification must be qualified and knowledgeable. Regarding the patient's clinical, surgical, and psychosocial conditions, promote qualified listening, have professional experience, critical judgment skills, and decision-making in accordance with protocol used in the unit, in addition to knowledge about the healthcare network systems (Lima *et al.*, 2023).

This research aims to strengthen the recognition of nurses as key players in the organization. of emergency care, highlighting, through updated data, the contribution of this This work aims to provide practical support for the efficiency of health services. Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to improvements in... training and professional practices focused on the nurse's role in critical environments,



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promoting improved care and patient safety at the entry points of the system.

health. Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate scientific evidence regarding

The importance of nurses in risk classification in emergency services in Brazil.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Risk classification in emergency services

The emergence of CR (Clinical Rehabilitation) arose from the need to organize care in... Emergency and urgent care units, as well as to reduce the risks and damage caused to Patients are being overwhelmed due to overcrowding. The concept of risk classification is closely linked to identification and prioritization of the most seriously ill patients, that is, those who require urgent care, being classified according to severity, suffering and risk to life (Monzoli *et al.*, 2024).

According to Campos *et al.* (2020), risk classification is a dynamic process used as a basis. International concepts and scales. Risks are classified into 5 levels, presenting a greater Reliability in assessment. Among the scale models, the following stand out: the Australian scale: *Australasian Triage Scale* (ATS); the Canadian protocol *Canadian Triage Acuity Scale* (CTAS®); The North American scale: *Emergency Severity Index* (ESI), and the English protocol: Manchester Triage System (Manchester Protocol).

According to Feitosa *et al.* (2024), it is a strategy that organizes the care flow and reduces risks. and improves the effectiveness of health services. The National Humanization Policy (PNH) It introduced the Risk Classification and Reception model (ACCR), which promotes listening. qualified, committed, and comprehensive care.

The Risk Classification system is used dynamically to identify the users who require immediate care, taking into account the potential risk and complications. Health and level of suffering should be considered, and care should be prioritized according to clinical severity. of the patient, and not the order of arrival at the service (Saldanha *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that risk classification in emergency services and Emergency care is essential to prepare the patient flow and provide more efficient assistance. a solution for patients whose health is compromised, and also seen by professionals working in this sector as a tool that standardizes the conduct of the team that are conducting an assessment of the people served (Duarte *et al.*, 2023).



2.2 Nurse qualifications for risk classification practice

Realizing that risk classification is a process that demands specific knowledge combined with an understanding of the environment and sensitivity to Identifying population characteristics and patient profiles highlights the importance of training. Proper professional nursing care, along with the provision of essential instruments to perform the task of classification according to the immediate service needs of individual (Marques; Melo, 2024).

Pinheiro *et al.* (2020) point out that the Ministry of Health recommends that the classification of risk assessment should be carried out by trained and experienced nurses who are proficient in clinical protocols and The ability to make decisions under pressure. Ongoing education is seen as a fundamental pillar. to maintain the quality of the screening.

Therefore, because the decision-making process in CR takes place in a scenario Complex and dynamic, it requires decisions to be implemented in a short period of time, with limited information, which makes continuing education of fundamental importance so that The nurse must possess specific knowledge to act effectively in each situation. A patient seeking healthcare services, in addition to experience in patient care. with various pathologies, in order to provide a safe and effective practice for the user (Frota *et al.*, 2021).

It has been identified that there is a need to expand the training of nurses to carry out CR (critical care). and the applicability/evaluation of the protocols to improve their specificity, since, The higher the professional qualification and the greater the number of hours spent practicing risk classification, The better the results, the better the prioritization of services provided to users of the services. urgent and emergency health care (Júnior *et al.*, 2023).

Finally, the presence of qualified nurses in emergency and urgent care units has This has shown a direct impact on health indicators, demonstrating the efficient performance of these professionals. It significantly improves clinical outcomes by reducing complications, length of hospital stay, and ...to hospital mortality. The ability of nurses to coordinate, assess, and manage the Care in critical situations is therefore indispensable for the sustainability of services. Urgency and emergency care for the promotion of quality care (Silva; Santos, 2024).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is a literature review, which provides a synthesis of the data. scientific studies on a given research problem and the application of the data results with

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 01/31/2026 | Accepted: 02/02/2026 | Publication: 02/04/2026 significant evidence. Furthermore, it can corroborate knowledge gaps for future investigations (Contim *et al.*, 2020).

This research was conducted based on the following steps: starting with the definition of The guiding question of the research, in the second stage, begins the search in electronic databases. Search strategies: in the third stage, the data was evaluated according to the title and objective. As proposed in the fourth stage, the analysis of the studies is necessary: it is required to organize the reading of the abstracts, In the full texts, the results were presented on Thursday via a chart, with the characteristics of the selected studies and finally, in the sixth stage, the discussion of selected evidence.

For this study, the Virtual Health Library (VHL) was used; the CAPES journals and the respective databases: Nursing Database - BDNEF; Latin American Literature and the Caribbean in Health Sciences - LILACS and *Scientific Electronic Library Online - SCIELO* with the keywords “risk classification”; “emergencies”; “emergency nursing”, recognized by the Health Descriptors (DeCS), where the operator was used to combine these databases. Boolean operator “AND”.

As search criteria, filters were used to better select the analyzed articles. These articles which must have been published between the years 2019 and 2024, in Portuguese, English and Spanish, not appearing in duplicate databases.

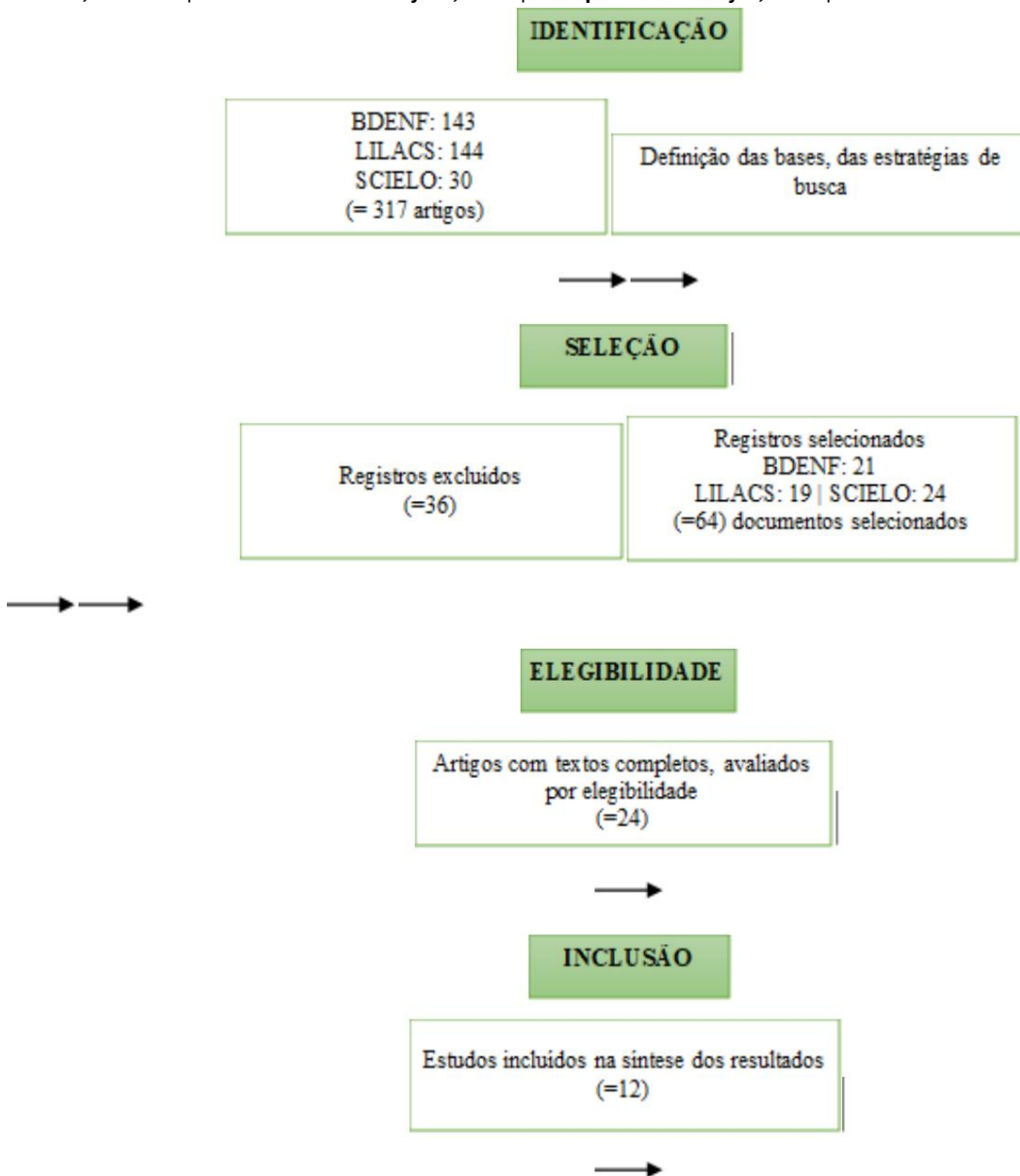
The exclusion criteria were: articles that were outside the selected period; works incomplete; theses, final course papers, monographs, and those that did not fit into proposed theme.

Flowchart 1 exemplifies the organization, structuring, and selection of articles that served For the basis of the literature review, 317 articles were initially found in the databases. of the data, being: 143 in BDENF, 144 in LILACS and 30 in SCIELO. After reading the titles and databases of The data obtained from the research yielded selected scientific articles, divided into: 21 in BDENF; 19 LILACS and 24 in SCIELO, according to the following flowchart:

Flowchart 1 - Flowchart for identifying, selecting, and including studies in the literature review.

Questão norteadora
Qual a importância da atuação do enfermeiro no processo de classificação de risco nos serviços de emergência no Brasil?





Source: Authors' own work (2025).

Based on the analysis performed, the information was organized to meet the objective. as presented in the article. An analysis was conducted of a total of 12 articles (Table 1), subdivided into the following databases: Data from: 2 BDENF, 3 LILACS, 7 SCIELO; containing the following items: title; authors and year; objective. and main results. The articles were evaluated in a way that allowed for comparison of their differences and similarities in order to include them in this review.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the 12 selected articles from the years 2019 to 2024, distributed across the databases of data from BDENF (2), LILACS (3) and SCIELO (7), allowed for a more in-depth understanding of



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The nurse's fundamental role in the risk classification process in emergency services.

In Brazil. The organization of information — including title, authors, year of publication,

Objectives and main results — enabled a critical comparison between the studies,

identifying points of convergence and divergence regarding the role of nursing in this stage.

crucial to the care.

The results show that the nurse occupies a strategic position in welcoming and Stratification of cases according to the degree of urgency is a key element in the efficiency of care.

and in patient safety. It is frequently noted that the nurse's qualifications, their

clinical judgment and the appropriate use of structured protocols (such as the Protocol of Manchester) directly influences the prioritization of care and the reduction of waiting times.

Waiting and organizing the flow within emergency services.

Despite the consensus regarding the importance of the nurse in risk classification, Some studies have revealed persistent challenges, such as work overload and insufficient resources.

Human resources and a lack of continuous training. These difficulties compromise effectiveness.

tracking issues consequently impact the quality of care provided to the population.

It was also observed that the importance of the nurse's autonomy was valued in this process.

It has strengthened in recent years, reflecting advances in professional regulation and in

recognition of their technical and scientific competence. Even so, the need for...

institutional policies that encourage lifelong learning and promote adequate conditions for work.

Therefore, the discussion of the results reinforces that the presence and performance of the nurse in Risk classification is essential to ensure effective emergency care.

Humanized and safe. The data analyzed indicate that investing in the continuous training of

The role of nursing professionals and the proper structuring of emergency services is a strategy essential for improving clinical outcomes for patients.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This literature review highlighted the relevance of the nurse's role in...

risk classification process in emergency services in Brazil. It was found that this

The professional plays an essential role in patient triage, contributing directly to the

Prioritization of care based on clinical severity, thus ensuring the efficiency of the workflow.

patient care and safety.

The correct application of risk classification protocols, such as the Manchester Triage System, requires

The nurse's technical skills, critical judgment ability, and practical experience,



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especially given the complexities of care in urgent and emergency settings.

Note that continuing education and investment in professional development are...

fundamental for making assertive decisions, especially in adverse contexts. Despite

Despite the progress, the studies analyzed point to persistent challenges, such as work overload,

scarcity of human resources and private infrastructure, which compromise the quality of

Training and full performance of nurses. Therefore, it is urgent that public policies

and institutions should value the profession through decent working conditions and ongoing training.

and recognition of the nurse's technical and scientific autonomy. It is concluded that the presence of

Impaired nursing professionals in risk classification not only improve outcomes

clinical care for patients, as well as strengthening the effectiveness of emergency services,

promoting more humane, agile, and safe care. It is hoped that this study will serve as a basis.

to foster new research, as well as to contribute to the training and professional practice of

nurses working in this critical and challenging context.

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