

Evolution of research questions in nursing in Mexico

Abstract

Perhaps the most complex part of research is to have a good question; to achieve it represents prior knowledge, thematic mastery, disciplinary vision and conceptual management. Thomas Kuhn considers that science travels through three moments: prescience, normal science and revolutionary science. From the review of the articles published in the two most traditional Mexican nursing journals in Mexico, the article explores how nursing research questions have evolved. It was concluded that most of the questions are in transition between prescience and normal science, and the reflections aimed at achieving a paradigm shift are very few.

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Development

In nursing as in any other science, every research must be attached to the scientific method, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the scientific method is: a method that has characterized natural science since the seventeenth century, consisting of systematic observation, measurement, experimentation, formulation, analysis and modification of the hypotheses.¹

Thomas Kuhn in his book *The structure of scientific revolutions*² affirms that as natural part of the development of the sciences they must possess a paradigm under which they try to solve the problems of its object of study; in the first instance, the prescience arises, it is characterized by the total disagreement and the constant debate of the essential aspects that concern its object of study, being so, almost as many theories as theoreticians can coexist in order to justify its own focus; in a second moment, normal science emerges as an activity dedicated to solve problems adhering to the rules of a paradigm in an attempt to explain, understand and deepen its object of study through the results of experimentation; the revolutionary science occurs when there is a rupture of the order and dogmas of normal science, to give way to new conceptual structures.

The best means to disseminate research advances are scientific publications, in Mexico the published nursing journals are scarce, only two have maintained acceptable standards of permanence and quality and are included in recognized editorial indexes, one of them is the *Revista de Enfermería del Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social*, it was the first nursing journal and was first published in 1988; its editorial mentioned that it had the spirit and the format to project the advances in assistance, teaching and research of the group of professionals;³ in this same issue a research article on quality of care in hospitalized patients was published,⁴ although the research question is not described, it is assumed that it is to know How the quality of care is from the opinion of patients and nurses?; as well as this, in many of the first articles published, the research question was focused on solving problems of the practice of care from a clinical-epidemiological perspective as well as aspects of teaching and administration.

Sixteen years later, *University Nursing Journal* appears and in the editorial of the first issue it was mentioned that its purpose was to disseminate the results of disciplinary research efforts,⁵ in this same issue a research report was published in which the research question was: Is there a difference in the level of self-care skills in women participants before and after the nursing intervention?⁶ Currently, the research questions that appear in these same two journals are mostly better structured, more consistent and above all denote a better conceptual mastery.⁷⁻⁹

In no way is it possible to affirm that the research questions that are made in nursing correspond entirely to the prescience, it would be more realistic to say that our discipline is in a space of epistemic transition between prescience and normal science. In a review of these two journals no research articles were found that placed their question at the level of revolutionary science as per Kuhn's proposal, however, there are in the literature paragraphs where it is asked whether the professional activity as such it is currently carried out is the only possible way of cooperating with human development. "The current perspective has a marked influence on the disease-centered approach, a situation that has limited professional work. It is necessary to relocate the nursing profession not only as an adjuvant in the recovery of health, but as a set of science and philosophy that works so that healthy people remain healthy, that is, that their object of study are also the individuals, families and healthy communities and thus develop further research to demonstrate how, in the field of health, nursing can generate knowledge that favors its scientific and human development.¹⁰

Conclusion

Although the research questions that are currently made in nursing are better structured than in the beginning, they still mostly correspond to a space of transition between the prescience and normal science. The questions tending to reflect on the work of the discipline tending to achieve a paradigm shift are still very scarce.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest

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