Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Levels of Burnout Among Oncology Nurses: A Systematic Review

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Healthcare work is characterized by the need to cope with complex situations arising from hospital settings in which treatment and care are provided to help people recover from disease. Healthcare providers are continually subjected to stress-inducing factors, which may provoke the development of burnout syndrome. Burnout syndrome, or simply, burnout, is a psychological disorder that was first studied in the field of social services by Freudenberg (1974). Today, in the most widely accepted contextualization, it is characterized by the presence of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (D), and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (PA) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). EE refers to workers’ feeling of physical exertion and also exhaustion of their emotional resources; D is the development of negative feelings and perceptions directed at patients, along with a cynical attitude toward them; and low PA is the tendency of workers to assess them negatively in dealing with patients and not feeling fulfilled by their work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The prevalence of burnout is high among nursing staff (Cañadas-De la Fuente et al., 2015), indicating that a high percentage of nurses are emotionally exhausted, as well as have a diminished sense of PA and have developed a depersonalized, cynical attitude toward patients. In the hospital context, this staff group may be the most commonly affected by the syndrome (Bacaicoa Parrado et al., 2012; Losa Iglesias & Becerro de Bengoa Vallejo, 2013). Nurses’ continual exposure to