

ADOPTIVE GRANDCHILDREN IN TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS

NETO POSTIÇO EM TEMPOS DE CORONAVÍRUS
NIETO ADOPTIVO EN TIEMPOS DE CORONAVIRUS

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ABSTRACT:

The present research was carried out in the period of social isolation (quarantine), in March 2020. The objective was to know reports of actions that UMA (University of Maturity of the Federal University of Tocantins) develops, through reflection on the benefits from the Neto Postiço project. The target audience of this research comprises elderly people aged 45 years or older, with chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension and asthma), since, according to studies published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), this group is the most prone to have complications that may fatally cause even death by Covid-19. It is in this context that, the elderly inserted in the project, receive attention through several actions, aimed at the comprehensive care of this group.

KEYWORDS: Actions; Affection; Watch out; Reports; Socialization.

Introduction

The beginning of the year 2020 was marked with a virus that doesn't represent just a cold. The new Covid-2019, popularly known as Coronavirus, was capable of bringing out a turbulence of world social and economic order, reflecting in speculations about collapses in health care and the rise of a deadly pandemic, spreading panic and fear. Governmental authorities have programmed several actions, and the most effective worldwide, meanwhile there is no predictability of intervention through preventive vaccination or through medicative ways, has been the collective and social isolation, prioritizing the risk group, who are the elderly and those with chronic diseases as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, among others. (COSTA, 2020)

The social isolation is a very important resort, both to reduce the spread of the new Covid-19 in our society, and to safeguard the elderly population that is included in the group considered to be at greatest risk. While we wait for a solution through science, social distance is the best mechanism that ensures our protection.

After the announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO), regarding the current pandemic scenario, it is even more necessary to reinforce of immunity care, as well as individual and collective protection measures. Having strengthened immunity can reduce the chances of getting many types of infections, including Covid-19. Although strengthening the immune system does not prevent the spread of the disease, this action can contribute to the fight against the new virus, and the recovery of those who may be infected. (MONTAGNA, 2020)

Thus, the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), through Dr. Neila and Dr. Neto, created the Project called "Humanizing in Coronavirus time" (UMAnizando em tempo de Coronavírus), with a view to developing the well-being and mental health of the elderly, since isolation tends to increase the feeling of loneliness.

In this sense, the focus is guidance, aiming at the patience and wisdom of the elderly, bearing in mind that everyone can and should do their part, respecting social distance, as in the experiences of other countries, which illustrate this situation well, in which large-scale collaboration is necessary.

Many of us have elderly people in our familiarity. In the Brazilian reality, it is common for children, young people and the elderly to live together. For this reason, it is very important not to isolate only the elderly, as the youngest, when they have external contacts, can return infected.

Thus, we must take the care recommended by the health agencies, with proper hand hygiene, eliminating external contact whenever possible, and, when there is a real need to break security protocols, make use of personal protective equipment. The history has taught us, by the example of other global pandemics, that through technology, continued efforts by public authorities and mutual cooperation, barriers are broken and the prospect of reaching a better world is perfectly possible.

In compliance with these prerogatives, this study aims to collect reports from the elderly who experience this moment of social isolation and had the opportunity to experience help by adoptive grandchildren.

The methodology used in this experience report is based on Thematic Oral History, which, according to Montysuma (2006), seeks to discuss the singularity of fieldwork,

involving the relationship between the researcher and the people who are willing to provide a report, as a condition of a science that deals essentially with the subject.

This is a descriptive study, developed in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic, of experience report, from the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), whose main objective is to support this social group during the period of isolation, with pedagogical, psychological and orientation assistance through occupational therapy and actions focused on food.

The monitoring of academics at the University of Maturity (UMA) was based on the development of practices, addressing related topics. The methodological basis used in the activity was the interview with the elderly inserted in the project, by means of telephone calls, instant communication applications and face-to-face visits, when necessary, in compliance with the recommendations of the health agencies, always aiming at the care and zeal for the health of everyone involved in the process.

The University of Maturity has referenced technologies, both in Brazil and abroad. On February 13, 2020, it completed 14 years of foundation. About five thousand elderly people have already been there. Currently, the program is developed on the campuses of Araguaína, Palmas and Porto Nacional. The need for an approximation between university and community, added to the repressed demand for educational activities for the elderly and the psychosocial characteristics of this stage of life (taste for socializing, participation in classes, discipline, health care and many others), led to the creation of the project on screen, which presented excellent results throughout its performance.

Adoptive Grandchildren in Coronavirus times is a project that integrates Postgraduate students from the Federal University of Tocantins, who made themselves available to the elderly to get in touch with them, by telephone, buy things at pharmacies, supermarkets; bring sewing machines, or glasses for repair; walk the dogs when it is necessary, and be, above all, ready to meet other needs that can be solved without incurring risks for both parties. These actions give an active voice to the elderly, through this democratic project, which has its practical efficiency visualized through dialogue.

Analysis and discussion

A social support network can become increasingly challenging for the elderly in normal times, even more in a global pandemic scenario, in which everybody is isolated, afraid of having presential contact. Unfortunately, older people are less valued, and there are no actions by the public authorities to provide full quality support for this social group. The following report is of an elderly woman who is distressed by all factors of

social isolation, especially because she cannot go to masses to raise her prayers and perform the rites and beliefs regarding tithing. The support of an adoptive grandson, at that moment, eased her concerns.

Jandira reported that, during the weeks that followed, she was very sad and cried a lot, as she is still locked at home. She could not go to the funeral of two friends. Her daughter-in-law, Suerlene, keeps going to her house every day and buying groceries for her. Her children have already visited her, but they stay for a short time. Her nephews keep calling her, but they are not going to her house. Mrs. Jandira is concerned with the quarantine, because she wants the classes to return, and this makes her thoughtful and sad with all this uncertainty. On Sunday, the Adoptive Granddaughter from the University of Maturity called her and noticed how sad she was, because she cried a lot. On Monday, the Adoptive Granddaughter visited Jandira with the necessary care. She said she was too sad, because she was still worried about this pandemic, and "it was a good thing she was used to staying home, otherwise she wouldn't even know what it would be like". She asked me to take the tithing money to the church office. Mrs. Jandira prays the rosary every day and follows Mass on Sundays on the radio. Such action comforts her a lot and says that with faith in God everything will pass. (INTERVIEWEE 1).

The elderly must be treated with love, affection, respect and tenderness, especially those who live alone and do not have the active and continuous presence of family members. Young people can enlighten the hearts and lives of the elderly. Those whose bonds of life are weakening, need the beneficial contact with the hope and liveliness of youth. Young people, in turn, can be helped by the wisdom and experience of the elderly. Contact with a person in need of sympathy, patience and selfless love is an invaluable blessing for many people.

Loving is caring. The following report is from a 56-year-old woman who adopted a 12-year-old child, who is the only one who lives with her. This elderly woman had five children, but she has always felt alone. Today she is very happy to have met the UMA project.

At first, I was very sad, I cried for everything. I was depressed because I could not leave home or study. I was so happy with the activity book you gave me and I still have a teacher who helps me every day to correct my homework. I am so happy with the messages you send to me daily and with your care. Thank God you called me. Today I was praying because I heard about a friend who was hospitalized with this Coronavirus. I asked God: Who is going to take care of her? I received news that she is better, thank God. You are an angel! Sometimes I have no one to talk to, then you call me, and this is like a remedy in my life. I may be sad, but when you call me everything gets better in my life. You can call me as many times as you want! Sometimes I talk to myself,

because we are needy, and talking to someone helps to relax. There are children that don't even call us, and you give us attention. My Adoptive Granddaughters, you are the family I don't have. This is a miracle. I have no words to thank. I like to talk to positive people; I don't even want to know about people who want to bring us down. I want close to me who makes me grow. I feel a happiness that it seems that I have taken medicine. I never felt so loved and so dear to have met you at UMA. (INTERVIEWEE 2)

Leaving oneself, helping others, is a form of affection that, as can be seen, promotes the health of volunteers and volunteering. However, like any form of work, volunteering requires a rigorous assessment of skills, preparation and supervision. This avoids frustrations and allows you to take advantage of this enlightened desire to help others. Reaching out to others is a legacy.

Aging is adapting to a new phase of life, both for the elderly and for the children. The family is essential for the quality of life of this social group. The role of the family is present in current legislation, in the Elderly Statute, to protect, feed and care for the dignity of these people. However, the routine is not easy. Every day, there is a large number of elderly people who do not have the attention of their children to perform activities that are simple, but need a look of attention to meet their needs. Expressing affection each day is one of the most effective techniques for smoothing the rough edges of family life, as illustrated in the next report:

I am 82 years old and I live with two grandchildren. My dream is to learn to read and write. I love to do word searches. I still don't have a cell phone with WhatsApp. I have already bought two for my grandchildren and then I'm going to buy one for myself, so that I can talk while seeing people. I have a friend who called me and talked about some adoptive grandchildren from the University of Maturity, who were helping the old people in this quarantine. She said she would pass on my number to them, as they take better care of us than our family. My grandchildren who live with me don't help me much. This week my adoptive granddaughter called me. At first, I was a little suspicious. Then she ended up captivating me. I asked her to come and visit me. She came with the face covered by a mask and brought me a little book for me to do activities. How happy I was! I never had a teacher teaching me at home! I told her that my glasses were broken. She promptly asked me for permission to go to an optician to fix the glasses frame. When she was leaving, I said: Not even my kids do what you're doing for me. She calls me constantly, and sometimes even sings a song for me to hear on the phone. Never have I felt so loved by someone that I have never done anything for and didn't even know them. The other day, she came to visit me and I was so grateful that I put a perfume in her bag without her noticing. The other day, when my adoptive granddaughter called me, I told her that I was afraid of going through this quarantine and she wouldn't call me, or come to my house, because she is going to be back to work, and I don't know if she'll have time for me anymore. But she

said she is not going to abandon me. I was very happy! She is very positive. I like people like that. I really like her interest in me. It is a strength that she is giving me. We spent a lot of time talking on the phone. She tells me funny things that make me smile a lot. I even forget about my problems after I talk to her. I have 12 grandchildren. But my adoptive granddaughter is worth twice as much as my grandchildren. Thank God she appeared in my life. (INTERVIEWEE 3)

According to Ardem (2014), several studies show that mental health risks, including depression, increase dramatically for older people when they are isolated and lonely.

Social support showing attention can also be done through daily or weekly calls. After all, no person is an island in itself. This action can make the elderly move from a passive stage to an active one, in the construction of a new perspective of life, through a friendship, considering that "anything that contributes to love and intimacy, connection and community, it is curative" (ORNISH, 1998, p. 23). He also states that, "when we feel loved, cared for and intimate, we are more likely to be happy and healthy. There is less risk of getting sick and, if we do, the chance of survival is greater" (ORNISH 1998, p. 32).

Several studies cited by this author corroborate the relevance of love to the health of all people. They also highlight the importance of giving and receiving this feeling, in addition to showing how harmful social isolation without attention and affection can be. Telephone contact has been used very well in those times, because a call, with a conversation full of optimism and good laughs, can improve a person's mood.

Laughing is the best medicine. Sharing a laugh with someone can improve your mood and your health. A healthy sense of humor can release a person from everyday stress and worry that contributes to the buildup of stress. When you and someone else share a humorous insight or a funny perspective on a situation, you both disconnect from the tension and become lighter when you come together. (ARDEM, 2014, p. 239)

The following report is from a 61-year-old woman, who is a cardiopath and lives alone. Shee says that even if the family called a few times, she still felt alone, but after receiving the care and attention of an adoptive granddaughter, she started to feel much better.

I can't thank you for the care and attention for me. Only God can thank you for what you have done. My life improved a lot after I started getting your attention, because, before that I was getting a little depressed, and when I got depressed, my pressure was always 15, 16, even taking the medication. But then, I started talking to you. I changed a lot, my pressure is normal and just by talking, laughing, this affection and love that you have for me, it is being rewarding and wonderful. We

have become so close that it seems that I am already your family. I talk to your parents and your two-year-old nephew. He even says he loves me. I think it's so beautiful. Dr. Neila, thank you from the bottom of my heart, because many good people have entered my life to talk to me. Every day, there is an audio for me asking how I am and what I'm doing. It's been very rewarding. Thank you so much, from the bottom of my heart and God bless you. (INTERVIEWEE 4)

There is no more demanding task for our mind than to relate well, to participate in a good dialogue. Good conversation is much more stimulating to the brain than filling in a crossword puzzle, or reading a book of many pages.

Lee (2020), reminds us of the golden rule, which explains the following rhetoric, "treat others as you would like to be treated". This saying goes far beyond simply being kind to people, or going out of your routine to be available and helpful to those in need. This consists - principally, though not exclusively - of the ability to express affections well, to understand the other, to be interested in them, to leave oneself. In short, to love, which also means taking care of the other. When our eyes are attentive to help others, life in society becomes more meaningful, both for those who help and those who are helped. We live in times of great anguish that lead to a feeling of emptiness. We see restless bodies and suffocated souls crying out for attention and affection. It is hoped that love, attention and affection shown by each elderly person, will be much more lived as in these reports presented here. Next, it is possible to clearly observe the maxim guided by Lee (2020) in the above-mentioned explanation.

I am a 70-year-old woman. I have two children who are married, but they live in the world, they don't pay attention to me and take care of their lives there. I stay here, in this shack, alone. Me and my pains. This week I was very happy, because I received a basket of food from my adoptive granddaughter, and she took my broken sewing machine to repair. Now I'm going to make masks so I can donate. God is wonderful. There are still good people on Earth. And today, a neighbor appeared asking for food, poor thing. I went there and gave the only sugar I had and other little things. Look, today I got another sugar from this angel. It was God who sent that person. My adoptive granddaughter always calls me to see if I need anything. She goes to the grocery store to buy fruits and vegetables for me. The other day, I wanted to eat tapioca, but I had no flour. She came here to bring it to me. I really want to thank God that you came into my life. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. My life was not making sense. And when you showed up, I was very happy and I'm sure it's not just me. All the people who are being taken care of by you have been telling me how much they are feeling more loved, and they feel important now. You are wonderful, you pay attention, you are not arrogant and you treat us with affection and respect without wanting anything in return. This is so beautiful! I loved it! (INTERVIEWEE 5).

According to Caldas (2002), “care for the elderly in most parts of the world is carried out voluntarily and without remuneration, through an informal support system: family, friends, neighbors and community members”. Caring is not guardianship. Caring means recognizing the needs, singularities and desires of the others. It is to appreciate their autonomy, which can be expressed in small gestures. This is a very expensive value for all of us and it would be no different for the elderly. Our time calls for solidarity between generations. This involves care, contact and affection. We have seen several demonstrations in this regard, in which neighbors are available to shop for those in need, in addition to helping with other daily tasks. As an example of manifestation of care, the following report is presented.

When I heard about this quarantine, I was very sad. Despite being almost 60 years old, I work as a housekeeper and no one calls me to work anymore. But, thank God, I have an adoptive granddaughter who calls me constantly to check on me and asks if I need anything. During these two months of the pandemic, I have already received two basic grocery packages. And when she can, she comes to visit me. The other day, I was feeling a lot of pain in my body, coughing a lot. I went to the doctor and they said I had dengue. She came to my house to bring coconut water for me to hydrate. After a few days, I started to have back pain and the cough continued. My toenails and hands turned purple. I thought I would die. My adoptive granddaughter called me daily and suggested that I go to the doctor again and ask for a detailed lung exam. I went to the hospital and they only saw me because I said I was dying. They did an examination of my lung. I was lying down when they came to give me the result. They said I had Coronavirus. They prescribed some medicine and asked me to come home and to stay in a separate quarantined room, and to separate all my cutlery and clothes from the rest. They didn't want to give me any reports of the disease. They said I was in the system and that if I got worse, I would go back to the hospital. I asked my adoptive granddaughter to schedule a Covid-19 exam for me to take. She made my registration and is waiting for vacancies for me to go there. Even this, my granddaughter has helped me. I have no words to thank her for being so careful. I am recovering, I am almost healed and know that you, adoptive granddaughter, helped me a lot to overcome this delicate moment in my life. You have softened my days of pain. Thank you so much! (INTERVIEWEE 6).

Unfortunately, the elderly are being deprived of doing many things they enjoy. The important thing at this point is to provide them with all the care and attention they deserve. According to (2020), “it is not the time for old age to be taken as a social or family burden. It should not be placed in the debt column in a situation of social crisis like the one we are facing”. The lives of these people are very valuable, since, they are parents, grandparents, friends, someone’s love. The next report illustrates that the

presence, be it from near or far, helps irrefutably, as it conveys care and affection, as observed through the gratitude personified here.

At first, I was nervous about not being able to leave the house. I was also a little sad with the stoppage of UMA and SCFV services, but with the incoming calls, I was calming my heart and doing the exercises that were passed on in the groups. I'm being treated well. My daughter lives next to my house and gives me all the support I need. My son, even living in another neighborhood, always comes to visit me, and my friends at UMA call me regularly. What makes me happy these last few days, is that until March 2020, there was no confirmed case of Covid-19 in my city. I have a son in a wheelchair, and his brothers are alternating to take care of his needs, such as hygiene care, bathing and at the same time they come to take care of him, they take this moment to visit me. I walk every day on my street, because I am moving very little, and when this quarantine ends, a party must be held to celebrate. (INTERVIEWEE 7)

Staying active in old age is important, not only during quarantine. Being active is paramount to physical, mental and emotional health. Especially when it comes to the elderly, who deserve greater care because they are among the most severely affected by the Coronavirus, as mentioned above. Even in a situation of home collection, the interviewee above does not stay still, and always seeks to occupy her time.

The third age is a period of great changes for the individual. This includes a series of physical changes, retirement, illness, removal or loss of loved ones, as well as a reduction in independence and autonomy in general.

The adversities of this phase of life, according to psychologists, make the feeling of loneliness become even more acute for those over 60, increasing the impact of isolation on their mental health.

Thus, it is clear that care for this social group should be continuous and constant and should not be based only on a period of public calamity, as we currently experience, to the detriment of the global pandemic. It is worth mentioning that, before Covid-19, this group was already a social problem and lived far from the social perspectives of humanity.

Above all, the attention and affection with parents, grandparents and older relatives, is a unique act of pure love. It is a commitment to the noblest human ideals, ranging from simple care to the monitoring of their routine, from buying something they need or even simple attention, including family and social integration.

Thus, intergenerational care for the elderly promoted by UMA (University of Maturity of Tocantins), through the adoptive grandchildren, has been guided by respect

and preservation of everyone's autonomy, giving voice to the elderly, and also considering the importance of presence conditioned to respect for the totality and complexity of people, as well as their ways of life and cultural values, as explained by Rivas (2020). A reflection is raised, so that we have empathy to reach the real needs of this social group, providing, in fact, the best integral quality of life possible for them. It is a responsible and supportive attitude towards life, which is pleasing to us in the development of this process - those who need this practice and those who meet the needs of the elderly.

Final Considerations

The global pandemic hides a cruel and insidious side. More and more common cases of elderly people stranded in nursing homes and in their houses, amid the spread of COVID-19.

The elderly are the group that is most at risk of developing complications related to this virus, which can even lead to irreversible loss of life. The orientation has been that they remain isolated and young people, especially children, keep their distance from people over 60.

According to Rivas (2020), "science has shown that, for social mammals, contact is as important as sunlight. For this reason, social distance is causing physical effects of different ranges". According to research carried out recently at the University of Miami's Institute of Touch Research, which is founded by Dr. Tiffany Field, the following statement can be observed in an interview:

The confinement allowed her team to start other studies, which still generate interesting data: 26% of the research subjects say that the quarantine made them miss contact a lot, while 16% said they missed it moderately. However, 97% reported sleeping problems. Field attributes these difficulties to the lack of serotonin, one of the hormones whose levels increase when we touch and are touched. Insomnia can be a side effect of the pandemic. (RIVAS, 2020)

According to the aforementioned, specialists have deduced that the lack of social and physical contact decreases the immunity of our body, making it more susceptible to viruses, as a whole, especially to COVID-19. Social detachment aims to prevent the spread of this invisible enemy. In compliance with the factor, isolation, and in response to loneliness, with the purpose of easing the anguish and the drastic effects of it, UMA

found itself in the duty to create the Adoptive Grandchildren Program, to assist, support and provide for the supply of needs that the elderly have faced during the pandemic.

Faced with this situation, families are divided between homesickness and the need to preserve the lives of parents and grandparents and with the prerogative of attending to the daily situations of the elderly. Thus, they do not know how to help them, considering that they cannot maintain face-to-face contact, since the experts' recommendation is to avoid visits.

In the present study, it was found that the family itself cannot reconcile the need to keep the elderly always supplied, either with affection or with their physiological needs. The main difficulties encountered were the very social isolation that generated the feeling of anguish in the elderly, as they were unable to carry out their routine activities and their concern for the family members they are responsible for.

It is evident that, despite all the changes in the way of life of all people, it can be said that there has been a breakthrough, regarding to issues of affectivity. We started to see the home as an environment of care and affection, with the need for appreciation, even more of the loved ones, whether they are from the family circle or not, resulting from this action that ends in a group, today, more strengthened.

The need to maintain social isolation during the pandemic does not mean a distance of affection. With the actions of the false grandson, these people's lives started to have more meaning. They felt cared for and loved, softening the feeling of missing their family members in this peculiar period of world history. Our elderly people felt important and protected, a fact that results in the release of hormones of happiness, such as endorphins, dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin. Feeling good is inseparable to humanize in times of COVID-19.

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Interviewees

ANA ALVES CARVALHO, entrevista concedida a Alessandra de Oliveira Vilela, 04 de maio de 2020, Novo Gama – Goiás.

FRANCISCA DA SILVA, entrevista concedida a Alenilda de Oliveira Vilela, 25 de abril de 2020, Novo Gama – Goiás.

MARIA NELMA, entrevista concedida a Alenilda de Oliveira Vilela, 27 de abril de 2020, Novo Gama – Goiás.

MARIA AUXILIADORA DE ALMEIDA SILVA, entrevista concedida a Alenilda de Oliveira Vilela, 28 de abril de 2020, Palmas, Tocantins.

MIGUELZINHA GABRIEL DE ARCANJO, entrevista concedida a Eliane Lima do Nascimento Borges, 28 de abril de 2020, Dianópolis, Tocantins.

ROSILDA RODRIGUES DA SILVA, entrevista concedida a Alenilda de Oliveira Vilela, 30 de abril de 2020, Novo Gama, Goiás.

TERTULIANO WALADARES DE SOUSA, entrevista concedida a Eliane Lima do Nascimento Borges, 28 de abril de 2020, Dianópolis, Tocantins.

RESUMO:

A presente pesquisa foi realizada no período de isolamento social (quarentena), no mês de março de 2020. Objetivou-se conhecer relatos de ações que a UMA (Universidade da Maturidade da Universidade Federal do Tocantins) desenvolve, por intermédio da reflexão acerca dos benefícios oriundos do projeto Neto Postiço. O público-alvo desta pesquisa compreende idosos com idade igual ou superior a 45 anos de idade, portadores de doenças crônicas (diabetes, hipertensão e asma), uma vez que, segundo estudos publicados na revista *British Medical Journal* (BMJ), este grupo é o mais propenso a ter complicações que podem vir a ocasionar, fatalmente, até mesmo o óbito por Covid-19. É nesse contexto que, os idosos inseridos no projeto, recebem atenção por meio de diversas ações, voltadas para o atendimento integral deste grupo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ações; Afeto; Cuidado; Relatos; Socialização.

RESUMEN:

La presente investigación se realizó en el período de aislamiento social (cuarentena), en marzo de 2020. El objetivo era conocer informes de acciones que desarrolla la UMA (Universidad de Madurez de la Universidad Federal de Tocantins), a través de la reflexión sobre los beneficios del proyecto Neto Postiço. El público objetivo de esta investigación comprende personas mayores de 45 años o más, con enfermedades crónicas (diabetes, hipertensión y asma), ya que, según estudios publicados en el *British Medical Journal* (BMJ), este grupo es Covid-19 es el más propenso a tener complicaciones que pueden causar la muerte, incluso la muerte. Es en este contexto que, las personas mayores insertadas en el proyecto, reciben atención a través de varias acciones, dirigidas a la atención integral de este grupo.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: Acciones; Afecto; Cuidado; Informes; Socialización.