



HUMAN MILK BANK UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DONATING WOMAN

BANCO DE LEITE HUMANO NA PERSPECTIVA DA MULHER DOADORA

BANCO DE LECHE HUMANA EN LA PERSPECTIVA DE LA MUJER DONADORA

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This study aims at signifying the values related to the act of milk donation which emerges in the symbolic imaginary traumas of nursing mother's values and understanding the meaning of the imaginary value structures which are revealed in the action of the donating women. This is a descriptive study with eleven nursing mothers of a bank of human milk of a university hospital through the systematized observation and individual interview. The concerning of the nursing mothers with a transforming action, willing to donate their milk, believing that this is a way for the transformation of the world. The values engendered in the action of donation of human milk emerge from the symbolic domains of acting of the health professionals, characterizing the imaginary myth of the nursing mothers. The donations require practices which reinforce the social imaginary during the care to health offered by the Milk Bank.

Descriptors: Breast Feeding; Nursing Care; Social Values; Nursing.

Objetivou-se significar os valores relacionados ao ato de doação de leite que emergem nas tramas simbólicas imaginárias das mulheres/nutrizas e compreender o sentido das estruturas imaginárias valorativas que se revelam na ação das mulheres doadoras. Estudo descritivo com onze nutrizas do banco de leite humano de um hospital universitário, através de observação sistematizada e entrevista individual. A preocupação das nutrizas com uma ação transformadora, disposta a doar seu leite acreditando ser este um caminho para a transformação do mundo. Os valores engendrados no ato da doação de leite humano emerge do campo simbólico de atuação dos profissionais de saúde, caracterizando o mito imaginário das nutrizas. A doação exige práticas que reforcem o imaginário social durante o cuidado à saúde ofertado pelo Banco de leite.

Descritores: Aleitamento Materno; Cuidados de Enfermagem; Valores Sociais; Enfermagem.

El objetivo fue significar los valores relacionados al acto de donar leche que emergen en las parcelas simbólicas imaginarias de mujeres/amamantadoras y comprender el significado de las estructuras imaginarias valorativas que revelan la acción de mujeres donantes. Estudio descriptivo con once amamantadoras del banco de leche humano de un hospital universitario, a través de observación sistematizada y entrevista individual. La preocupación de las amamantadoras con acción transformadora, dispuesta a donar su leche creyendo ser este el camino para el cambio del mundo. Los valores engendrados en el acto de donar leche humano emergen del campo simbólico de actuación de los profesionales de salud, caracterizando el mito imaginario de las amamantadoras. La donación exige prácticas que refuercen el imaginario social durante la atención a la salud por el Banco de leche.

Descriptor: Lactancia Materna; Atención de Enfermería; Valores Sociales; Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

The cultural means in which man is born, and is inserted, results from his interference alongside nature. So, the concept of culture becomes quite wide, for when the man acts in it, when making a wood table, for example, is producing culture. Therefore, the mediating elements in the relation between the man and the world – instruments, signs and all the human artifacts loaded with cultural meanings, are built in the relations among men⁽¹⁻²⁾.

The symbolic systems, particularly the language, makes communication among the individuals possible and the establishment of meaning that allows the interpretation of the objects, events and situations of the real world. Therefore, the relation of man with the world is mediated by this direct action, and the intermediary link of the man/world relations is formed by instruments (external elements to the subject) and by the signs (instrumental of psychological activities). It means to say that the individual construction is the result of the interactions among the subjects mediated by culture⁽³⁻⁴⁾.

The expression 'imaginal world' refers to the images, to the imaginary, to the imagination and to the symbolic in the social life⁽⁴⁾. In this imaginal world which expresses the symbolic value of the social life, the Human Milk Bank (HMB) is inserted, an institution of social and valuing commitment, not only due to the action of breastfeeding but also because it is a physical and cultural space, of development of the intellect and of the sensibility of everyone who is somehow linked to it.

Concerning this understanding, the act of breastfeeding is not only established by natural and biological aspects but constructed by daily activities of the families, a fact which is demonstrated in a scientific study of the benefits of maternal breastfeeding, especially after delivery⁽⁵⁾.

In the contemporaneity, the human being is impregnated by a positivist imaginary that needs to be worked in the social sphere, especially regarding breastfeeding once it is indispensable that the Milk Bank contributes for the effective participation of women/nursing mothers with actions of breastfeeding, providing them the opportunity to be sympathetic opting for the common welfare and justice, once it is a fundamental task of this service to provide the milk donators the opportunity of judging, choosing and deciding based on the exercise of a democratic and free life.

In this line of thinking, the Human Milk Bank must be perceived as a specialized center in the promotion, protection and support to the maternal breastfeeding, collection, processing and control of quality, classification, storage and distribution of maternal milk, under medical prescription and the prescription of a nutritionist⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾. Their objectives are: to orientate the family members and incentivize the maternal breastfeeding, to show the mothers the correct hold and position to breastfeeding from the very first feeding, to eliminate the harmful practices for the maternal breastfeeding; to promote the maintenance of the lactation; to teach how to milk when there is a separation between mother and son; to orientate as to the correct storage and transportation; to induce lactation; to clarify, in a preventive and corrective way, the mammary problems. Because it is mandatorily linked to a maternity ward and/or child hospital, the human milk bank is an institution without profit purposes, and besides that, the products distributed by the milk bank are forbidden to be commercialized⁽⁷⁾.

However, the Human Milk Banks also started as an answer to the failure of the paradigm of the early weaning, caused by the use of freeze-dried milk which had substituted the traditional wet nurses. From the 80s on, with the reformulation of the public policies of health

in the country, which experienced a period of changes in their paradigms, the HMBs had as main purpose the promotion, protection and support to breastfeeding⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾. For such, institutional policies were elaborated which would favor the milk donating women, providing them support and clarification regarding the matters of breastfeeding, with the help of qualified health professionals acting emphatically in situations of pre-maternity and low weight at birth⁽⁷⁾, and so their work on the matter of the benefits of maternal breastfeeding became relevant⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾.

The creation and the development of the National Program of Maternal Breastfeeding (NPMB) prioritized the maintenance of the lactation of mothers who had their children hospitalized and the increase of the quantity of human milk extracted, to help the infant who could not be breastfed. Therefore, the HMBs stopped being considered 'human dairy', having a new social rule^(5,11). It is worth highlighting that in 1998, through the HMB of the Instituto Fernandes Figueira (IFF), the Fundação Instituto Oswaldo Cruz (FIOCRUZ), started to coordinate the elaboration and implementation of the project called Rede Nacional de Bancos de Leite Humano (REDEBLH) (a National Network of Human Milk Banks) aiming at guiding the formulation, the implementation and the supervision of the state policy in the area of work of the existing HMBs in the Brazilian territory⁽¹²⁾. The HMB network celebrates its 70 years of foundation in 2013, where it collects more than 160 thousand liters of pasteurized human milk with certified quality, which are distributed to more than 175 thousand infants⁽¹³⁾.

It is common sense that the human milk bank stimulates the psycho social functions and develops a net of possibilities related to the family and social nucleus, favoring the acquisition of human bank by the woman/nursing mothers who cannot breastfeed, thus contributing significantly to a better interaction between them and their children. The nursing team has the

responsibility of the transmission of the information regarding maternal breastfeeding, clinical handling and orientation/techniques to prevent the initial difficulties of breastfeeding⁽⁵⁻⁷⁾.

Based on the above considerations, the following objects were established: 1) to identify the values related to the act of milk donation which emerge in the imaginary symbolic acts of the women/nursing mothers; 2) to understand the meaning of the valuing imaginary structures which are revealed in the action to donating women.

METHOD

It is a phenomenological study with qualitative approach, considering that there is less concern with generalization and more with the deepening and the covering of the comprehension of the phenomenon which is the aim of this study. Therefore, the tasks and the challenges of the social scientists who work with the qualitative approach are: to define, in its totality, the symbolic level of the meanings and of the intentionality, constituting it as a field of investigation and attributing it a degree of systematization through the development of methods and techniques⁽¹⁴⁾.

The participants were eleven women/nursing mothers donator of human milk of the Human Milk Bank of the Hospital Universitário Antonio Pedro (HUAP), based on the following criteria of inclusion: being a woman/nursing mother during breastfeeding and using the services of this HMB as human milk donator. So, the process of saturation of the statements of the participants of this study was established.

The study followed as procedures: the materialization of the symbolic values by the woman/nursing mothers during breastfeeding, users of the services of HMB/HUAP and the analyzes of the process of symbolic structuring of the act of donation of human milk, the research was carried out in the HMB

unit, turned to the questions of health of the maternal-infant population, including the offering of services, one of them was the collection of human milk, also working to clarify doubts concerning breastfeeding with the donators. The health professionals working in it, such as the physician, pediatrician, nutritionist, psychologist, social assistant, nurse, among others, offer these women a high quality service for the collection and distribution of human milk.

For the data collection the techniques of systematized observation were used, and individual interviews made, for such a semi structured instrument with open and closed questions was used⁽¹⁴⁾. The questions used in the instruments of collection were developed based on the hierarchy of the Theory of the Values⁽¹⁵⁾. The interviews occurred from January to March 2010, having been recorded in magnetic tape with the authorization of the subjects, and later transcript by the researcher for the validation of the respective interviewed subject, previously to the analysis of the collected material

In order to analyze the obtained data, the formulation of thematic category was chosen⁽¹⁴⁾, and at the final stages of the analysis the aim was to establish articulation between these data and the Theory of Values, a philosophy of values which, besides having been developed opposing to axiological rationalism, can be considered due to the enhancing of domain of knowledge which privileges the logical-intellectual processes revealed through the emotional intuition, that is, through the emotional feeling⁽¹⁵⁾.

The treatment of the data passed by the proposed symbolic values, that is, to build a myth, to develop a narrative of rather existential nature, in order to extract, from the speeches of the interviewed subjects, the understanding of the process of valuing symbolic structuration of the donation of human milk at the Hospital Universitário Antônio Pedro/UFF. For such, the

sensitive listening was practiced, which consists in three types: the clinical scientific listening concerned with what happens with the people in their practices, that is, centered on the subject, in the individual valuing imaginary; the philosophical listening, which covers the intimate values of the people and of the group, centered in the social imaginary; and the poetic listening, which is conjugated with the previous ones, requires redoubled attention of the researcher to what is new happening in the group, especially concerning the minoritarian or dissonant speeches which question what was already structured by the group, by the society, that is, what was instituted⁽¹⁵⁾.

Therefore, it can be stated that the sensitive listening is inserted in the crossing of objectives of this study, and that the analysis followed the parameters of interpretation of the values⁽¹⁵⁾, based on the patterns of the sensitive listening already referred to. Along this line of thinking, the affirmation of the values was validated, and also the woman-being donator of human milk as well as her conception of the symbols in order to mediatize her relations with the world.

From this analytic process, two units of significance emerged: 'The donation of human milk passing by what was instituted and instituting at the HMB/HUAP' and 'Imaginary myth of the woman/nursing mothers in the donation of human milk'.

The investigation was made after its appreciation and approval by the Committee of Ethics in Research of Faculdade de Medicina of Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), being approved according to what is established in Resolution no. 196/96 of National Council of Health (NCH), under protocol CAAE 0199.0.258.000-11. All of them signed the Informed Consent Form conditioning the respective voluntary participation assuring them the anonymity and the secrecy of the information through the use of an alpha numeric code (N₁...N₁₁).

RESULTS

In the present study the characterization of the subjects showed the diversity concerning age – the youngest one was 18 years old, while the oldest one was 39. Most of them had finished high school and had a formal occupation. The family income reached the amount of R\$ 830.00 reals, ranging from one to six minimum wages, considering the value of the minimum wage at the time of the research. All the families were of the nuclear type.

Concerning the characteristic of the delivery and previous experience with breastfeeding, it was observed that four were primiparas; seven had regular deliveries and one reported complication during the delivery. From this group, two delivered premature babies. The experience of having breastfed was considered important by all the women. Concerning the type of breastfeeding practiced, they mention their milk as the only food for the baby. At the moment of the interview, eight babies were being breastfed and three, although still being breastfed, had already started eating pasty food.

Understanding the speech as a result of a social process, the symbolic context can be revealed from the elements of the language. Therefore, the interpretative attitude followed all the process of investigation until the final stage of the analysis of the obtained data, made under the light of thinking of the already mentioned authors.

Human milk donation passing by the instituted and instituting at HMB/HUAP

Searching evidences, aspects of the imaginary that could enrich or limit the practices of the human milk donation, answers were found for the following question: 'How do you understand/comprehend the donation of human milk in the Human Milk Bank at HUAPP?' In the statements of the interviewed subjects, it was possible to notice that there are donators who are

really concerned with a transforming action, willing to donate their milk believing that this is a way for the transformation of the world, according to their speeches: *So, they asked me: why donate milk? So I say: my breasts are full, my little baby sucks, but there is always some milk left, then I take out the milk and donate it to the MHB, once it will be used by other babies (N₅). I think that I would be impeding starvation, the hunger of living, so my conscious is light, knowing that I am donating for the ones who need the milk (N₆). I question myself, why I didn't I know and I didn't understand the importance of donating milk. To donate is love, it is faith, it is very pleasant and it was very good for me to donate (N₇). My milk may not save a baby, but it is like medicine for the children, it has several benefits, this is what I think anyway (N₈).*

The institutions of health do not inform or orientate the women about the care with the breasts or about the possibility of donation of the maternal milk, only following institutional protocols and routines, revealing a lack of performance of the health professionals in the process of health education, as it is observed in the following statements: *At the maternity ward they told me that any mother can breastfeed, it is easy, every mother can (N₁). At the doctor's office I wanted to know what to do to take care of the breast, because it was very full and the only thing that was said was: you have to breastfeed more often (N₄). At the health post I said I had a lot of milk and wanted to donate ... they told me that it was nonsense (N₁₁).*

According to that, the women/nursing mothers come to the Human Milk Bank of Hospital Universitário Antonio Pedro presenting a lot of difficulties with the breasts, all related to the process of breastfeeding, which should be reevaluated by the maternity ward in order to program actions of health education facing breastfeeding. Once this is not happening, it can be perceived that the 'instituting' wants to be stronger than the 'instituted' although the obstacles are big.

In their daily activities, the donating women are submitted to an excess of information on the process of breastfeeding and milk donation, which imposes them limits as to the comprehension of the importance of donation, as seen in the following speeches: *I have lot of information at home, my whole family says that the milk must be only for my baby, once donating milk can make my milk weak and it will be*

over (N₂). *I take out all the excess of milk for donation, but my husband says: wouldn't you lack milk for the baby? Understood?* (N₃). *Donating milk is very good, we are helping the other, but it is hard working, to explain to everyone that there wouldn't be any lack of milk to my daughter, everybody thinks that donating milk there will be not any left for my girl, and then I have to explain, always* (N₇). *I am on a leave, my colleagues say: Gosh! It is difficult to breastfeed and you still take out milk for donation? You are crazy* (N₈).

The health professional in the orientation for human milk donation does not value the woman/nursing mother, once he does not provide the information concerning this possibility in maternity. This can be confirmed in the following speeches: *Once I had the prenatal, they didn't say anything about donating my milk, but today I have a lot of milk and I know the importance of donating, it's good for my baby and for the ones who are born too small, because my milk is a vaccine, that I know, to avoid diseases* (N₅). *When I knew that I could donate my milk ... Ah! It was the best to be able to be sympathetic* (N₉). *Only here, at the School Hospital did I know that I could donate my milk. Before that I didn't even know ... I feel strong knowing that I have milk for my son and for other babies, this is grand, isn't it* (N₁₀).

So, a change of posture of the health professionals is necessary concerning clarifying information on the donation of maternal milk, not only to guarantee health and food for the infant, but also to demystify some beliefs and values which persist in the imaginary of the nursing mother regarding the process of maternal breastfeeding.

Imaginary myth of the women/nursing mothers on the donation of human milk

The Human Milk Bank of HUAP is based on the values of its mission to guarantee the promotion, protection and support of maternal breastfeeding, adequate nutrition of the premature and/or pathological newborn in a hospital of the Metropolitan Region II of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, through the capitation, processing and distribution of human milk, always respecting the recommendation of the Health Department (HD) and of the World Health Organization (WHO).

It is a Milk Bank accredited at the Instituto Fernandes Figueira and its health professionals manifest the ethical value, based on human ethics, the value of the sacred and the human sacredness and social value ruled in the society relations expressed in the daily activities, as a way to lead the work of clarifying concerning the donation of human milk, as stated by a speech of an interviewed subject: *The health professionals are serious, they tell us how we should proceed in order to donate milk, they always respect each woman, they don't leave anything behind, they are always present* (N₁₁).

The composition of the statements which structure this category, centered on the speeches of the donators, reflect the engendered values in the act of human milk donation which emerge from the symbolic domain of acting of the health professionals, thus characterizing the imaginary myth of the women/nursing mothers as follows: *the milk is a medicine, once it can feed the sick little baby better* (N₂). *Donating milking is wonderful, isn't it? It brings peace to our hearts* (N₃). *I feel satisfied, I feel more human sharing my milk* (N₆). *Our milk is sacred, it is made with our love* (N₉).

The importance of the donation and the worry with the care with the woman in the act of donating present meanings of human sacredness and of the health, once they are present in the statements of the donator which the health professions of the milk bank translate the importance of health as a precursor basis in the act of donation, and the milk is perceived as medicine for the diseases of the body of the hospitalized baby: *My milk is life for my baby and for the sick baby. I have a lot of milk, and that's why I donate, it is vaccine, it is medicine* (N₄). *Donating milk is donating health to the premature babies of the Neonatal ICU, I know that, I learned this here in the milk bank* (N₄). *Milk is life, it is health, I have a lot, so I can donate, once it represents life* (N₁₀).

These instituted values are essential for the imaginary of the woman/nursing mother, concerning the donation of maternal milk, being considered an important practice of health in the view of the interviewed subjects.

DISCUSSION

What was instituted in the domain of action of donating human milk passes by the social value among the donators, favoring the social net of human milk donation as well as the social net for the health of hospitalized premature infants⁽¹⁶⁾. The instituting, as a biological value for breastfeeding, expressed by the health professionals, is opposed to what is instituted by the HMB in the matter of human milk donation, that is why in some maternity wards, doctor's offices and health posts do not divulged the possibility of donation of the human milk, a fact that was denounced; they only talk about breastfeeding as an easy process for any woman; that is, they only follow their routines without any concern with the act of breastfeeding, mammary disorder, the access of milk, besides not providing orientation on the care with the breast during lactation, not even how to donate human milk.

Currently there is no doubt that breastfeeding is the best way to feed and interact with the baby⁽¹⁷⁾, however, so that the process does not jeopardize the way the woman/nursing mother, it would be necessary to have the action of a health professional (doctor, nurse) together with the orientation of education in health for the care with the breast in the period of lactation⁽¹⁸⁻¹⁹⁾, thus gradually reducing the problems inherent to this process.

The process of inspiration of the donating women is present in their valuing exercise for the donation of human milk, but, it is little stimulated by the health professionals. The health services which act directly with the women and their family members in their puerperal-pregnant period do not publicize the real role of the HMB, their advantages for the donating woman and the use her milk after pasteurization. In the imaginary, what the donator shows is that, in the health services, human milk donation is not mentioned. The 'instituted' (the orientation of the health professionals) does not link the

possibility of milk donation, but the 'instituting' (the donating women) are willing to do it, showing a domain of values on the acting of donating.

Along this line of thinking, it is surmised that the human milk is very important for all the infants, once it feeds, protects against infections, respiratory and diarrhea diseases, besides providing the first immunity for the baby, which is extremely important for his growth and development^(6,8,20-21).

Therefore it is possible to infer that the public policies turned to the theme will not have repercussion unless there is effective clarifying work with the health professionals who act in the services of Maternity Wards/Health Posts/Health Centers/ Family Health Programs and private services. So, like the social relations among health professionals and women/nursing mothers focusing a system of rules according to an imposed manner by the social rule, it is in the imaginary that the values and beliefs which express the possibility of the woman/nursing mother to donate or not her maternal milk are unleashed, thus configuring the act of donation as a form of social responsibility.

When thinking about the fundamentals or ethical principles which guide the action of the nurse, one cannot neglect the matters we are discussing, once the exercise of nursing basically embodies consciousness, freedom, values and responsibilities, which are inserted in the culturally built or transformed context of our times, as meanings socially attributed to the act of the nurse⁽²²⁾, it is essential that during their professional practice at the HMB/HUAP the nurses use the social and human values as a way in nursing premise.

The statements to the donator confirm what has been established in the scientific literature, which considers a value the health aimed by all types of society which, for such, through generations ratify costumes

and concepts, and one of them is maternal breastfeeding, a function of excellence of the woman which, according to the cultural expectations, is a moment of full accomplishment of the femininity, although still having a strong influence of the social environment⁽²³⁾.

Another value which is instituted is the sacred one, present in each human being, conscious or unconsciously. This value brings in its core the existential matter life/death concerning the donation of the human milk, so present in the daily lives of the donators. So, the meaning of the sacred, as strange as it may seem, is the fact that the feeling of the donation at the moment in which the women share their sacred milk with other babies, can be affectively perceived⁽⁴⁾.

Based on the above considerations, it can be perceived that the valuing of life prevails related to death through the donated milk and that the manifested myth is presented as a component of the process of donation in the domain of health and sacredness of the human life, thus becoming the conducting axis of the process of enlightenment of the health professionals in the domain of the actions in a HMB.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The search for the meaning of life impels men and women in their daily struggle. According to that, the donation of milk is a powerful and transforming action in the life of the human milk donators and in the lives of the baby receptors of the pasteurized milk.

The relation instituted/instituting showed to be jeopardized with the act of donation of the human milk, in the questions of the health professionals facing the clarification of the action of human milk donation and breastfeeding, where the 'instituted' is the biological being and the 'instituting', the transformation of the assistance for the domain of the humanized science. Another facet of the 'instituted' is the misinformation

regarding the process of human milk donation; but the donators build 'instituting' strengths which sustains their desire of donation as a process of social responsibility constituting a net of donating women.

The manifested myth of the donators of the human milk bank configures the symbolic imaginary of the milk donation as health value, the value of the sacred and the social value, constituting the process of action of the milk bank as guiding axis to assistential practices.

So, the human milk bank assumes an important role in the process of maternal breastfeeding, configuring one of the facets of the social imaginary which pictures the figure of the donator of the human milk as an essential member of the symbolic net for the success of breastfeeding.

COLLABORATIONS

Alves VH, Rodrigues DP, Branco MBLR, Souza RMP, Souza RRB and Medeiros FVA contributed for the conception, analysis, interpretation of the data, writing of the article and final approval of the version to be published.

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