Elements of masculinity that vulnerabilize men to morbimortality by COVID-19: integrative review


ABSTRACT
El objetivo fue conocer los elementos de masculinidad que hacen a los hombres vulnerables a la morbilidad y mortalidad por COVID-19. Se trata de una revisión integradora, realizada en mayo de 2020, a través de las plataformas Pubcovid-19 y la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud, se utilizaron las siguientes estrategias de búsqueda “Covid” y “Men”; “Covid” y “Hombres” y “Salud”; “Covid” e “Identidad de género”, afirman 490 documentos y luego de los criterios de inclusión, totalizaron 07 artículos. Los elementos de masculinidad que incitan a la vulnerabilidad de los hombres a la morbilidad y mortalidad por COVID-19 se refieren a la provisión familiar y la consiguiente exposición ocupacional en el trabajo, estilo de vida poco saludable, expresado por el tabaquismo y el alcoholismo, violación de las reglas de distancia social, descuido de prácticas, medidas preventivas, que reverberan en el sistema inmunológico masculino debilitado. Sin embargo, la literatura también reveló que la falta de búsqueda masculina de servicios de salud influenciada por la convicción de invulnerabilidad y por los discursos políticos que alivian la enfermedad también están influyendo en el aumento de la exposición y mortalidad masculina por COVID-19. El conocimiento de los elementos que favorecen al hombre a la enfermedad y consecuente muerte por la enfermedad, urge que se piense en prevención para este público.

DESCRIPTORS: Coronavirus Infections; Men’s Health; Indicators of Morbidity and Mortality

RESUMEN
El objetivo fue conocer los elementos de masculinidad que hacen a los hombres vulnerables a la morbilidad y mortalidad por COVID-19. Se trata de una revisión integradora, realizada en mayo de 2020, a través de las plataformas Pubcovid-19 y la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud, se utilizaron las siguientes estrategias de búsqueda “Covid” y “Men”; “Covid” y “Hombres” y “Salud”; “Covid” e “Identidad de género”, afirman 490 documentos y luego de los criterios de inclusión, totalizaron 07 artículos. Los elementos de masculinidad que incitan a la vulnerabilidad de los hombres a la morbilidad y mortalidad por COVID-19 se refieren a la provisión familiar y la consiguiente exposición ocupacional en el trabajo, estilo de vida poco saludable, expresado por el tabaquismo y el alcoholismo, violación de las reglas de distancia social, descuido de prácticas, medidas preventivas, que reverberan en el sistema inmunológico masculino debilitado. Sin embargo, la literatura también reveló que la falta de búsqueda masculina de servicios de salud influenciada por la convicción de invulnerabilidad y por los discursos políticos que alivian la enfermedad también están influyendo en el aumento de la exposición y mortalidad masculina por COVID-19. El conocimiento de los elementos que favorecen al hombre a la enfermedad y consecuente muerte por la enfermedad, urge que se piense en prevención para este público.

DESCRIPTORES: Infecciones por Coronavirus; Salud del Hombre; Indicadores de Morbimortalidad.

RESUMO
Objetivou-se conhecer os elementos da masculinidade que vulnerabilizam homens a morbimortalidade pela COVID-19. Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa, realizada no mês de maio de 2020, por meio das plataformas Pubcovid-19 e a Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde. Utilizou-se as seguintes estratégias de busca “Covid” e “Men”; “Covid” e “Men” e “Health”; “Covid” e “Gender identity”, apresentando 490 documentos e após os critérios de inclusão totalizaram 07 artigos. Os elementos da masculinidade que incitam a vulnerabilidade do homem à morbimortalidade pela COVID-19 dizem respeito ao provimento familiar e consequente exposição ocupacional no trabalho, estilo de vida não saudável, expressos pelo tabagismo e alcoolismo, violação das regras de distanciamento social, negligência de práticas preventivas, que reverberam no sistema imunológico masculino mais debilitado. Entretanto à literatura também desvelou que a não busca masculina pelos serviços de saúde influenciado pela convicção de invulnerabilidade e pelos discursos políticos que minoram a doença também são influenciadoras na elevação da exposição e mortalidade masculina pela COVID-19. O conhecimento dos elementos que favorecem os homens ao adoecimento e consequente morte pela doença, urge que sejam pensadas estratégias de prevenção para esse público.

DESCRIPTORES: COVID-19; Saúde do homem; Indicadores da Morbimortalidade.
INTRODUCTION

Configuring itself as a pandemic, which has spread rapidly and devastatingly, COVID-19, caused by SARS-CoV-2, was detected on December 31st, 2019 in Wuhan, China. Due to its rapid speed of spread throughout the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a Public Health Emergency of International Importance (1), causing, until June 1, 2020, more than 6 million cases and more than 370 thousand deaths distributed worldwide. (2) In Brazil, it is important to consider the ascending and rapid characteristic of the epidemic curve, with more than 391 thousand confirmed cases and more than 24 thousand deaths, until May 26th, 2020 (3), the male audience being the most affected by the disease.

Male morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 is higher than female morbidity in several countries around the world. Studies reveal that in China, France, Germany, Iran, Italy and South Korea and Brazil about 60% of deaths are male. (4,5) In other epidemics, where infections occurred later than in the Middle East, higher male mortality had already been detected, which reveals a greater male vulnerability to the development of the disease. (6)

The vulnerability in health recognizes that, in view of the social, political-institutional and behavioral dimensions, different people and population groups have different susceptibilities, even if interconnected. Vulnerability starts to be articulated in three axes: individual, social and programmatic. (7) The individual dimension encompasses the knowledge and behaviors about the problem assumed by the person, in which he/she directs him/her to the risk event. (7) The social dimension relates individual conduct to the characteristics of the social space, such as: life cycle, social identity, social and institutional norms, gender relations, among other aspects. (7) And the pragmatic dimension refers to access to the health system, the actions recommended for the prevention and control of the disease and the social resources existing in the area covered by the health service. (7) It is noteworthy that the concepts of vulnerability were used in their three-dimensionality.

These data may be related to the elements that constitute the process...
of formation of male gender identity, since men are socially constructed to occupy public spaces, places that, in the context of the pandemic, are considered locus of transmission.

Furthermore, historically self-care is not a common practice for men who tend to be more exposed to health risk factors, and the search for medical assistance is undertaken in a phase of greater disease severity. Studies reinforce these findings when they reveal that in the Americas men live 5.8 years less than women, considering that they have behaviors that are toxic to their health. In this sense, it looks at health aspects from the perspective of gender as an analytical category that is important when considering the social, productive, political and cultural dimensions, reverberating in health practices and knowledge. In the current situation, even with the recommendations of the WHO and the Brazilian Ministry of Health for quarantine and social distance, men are the public that is most exposed. A research carried out by the Datafolha Institute reveals that women respect social distancing more than men. This implies that they resist the adoption of self-care practices, neglecting essential preventive hygiene measures during the pandemic, as well as ignoring mild symptoms of the disease and the health authorities’ warnings. Thus, there is a research question: What elements of masculinity make men vulnerable to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19?

In this sense, this article aims to: Know the elements of masculinity that make men vulnerable to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19.

**METHODS**

Study of integrative literature review that allows the synthesis of scientific evidence on a given theme from the search and expanded analysis of a variety of studies. Due to the context of social isolation, which makes it difficult for men to carry out an empirical research, searching the literature through an integrative review allows the compilation of relevant information, favoring the researcher with a more comprehensive understanding of the problem to subsidize the health care practice. In this sense, methodology proposes to point out gaps in knowledge, giving the researcher the direction to the themes that need scientific exploration.

The following inclusion criteria were constituted: articles available in full and free of charge that dealt with elements of masculinity make men vulnerable to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19.

In this sense, this article aims to: Know the elements of masculinity that make men vulnerable to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19.

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**RESULTS**

The analysis of the data went throu-
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The synthesis of the selected studies and the performance of comparisons of the main results that answered the research question. In addition, findings were interpreted based on the theoretical framework of the gender, with a view to discussing masculinities, relating them to the context of the pandemic of COVID-19 and the careless male in relation to their health.

When searching the VHL, 215 articles were obtained. When performing the same search in the PubMed database, 275 articles were obtained, totaling 490 documents. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria previously established, 343 documents remained, of which, only 07 addressed the central theme of the research and were part of the construction of the study.

It is noteworthy that the selection was guided by a checklist prepared by the research authors with relevant information from the articles. The process of identifying and selecting the studies followed the recommendations of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) as shown in figure 1 below:

Based on the seven selected publications, a table was developed exposing the characteristics of these publications according to title, authorship, year of publication, country, journal, methodology adopted in the study and the results found among the analyzed articles.

**DISCUSSION**

According to the researched scientific literature, one of the elements

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sex Differences in Mortality from COVID-19 Pandemic: Are Men Vulnerable and Women Protected?</td>
<td>Sharma G, Volgman AS, Michos ED. 2020 JACC Case Rep, U.S.A.</td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>- Pre-existing diseases; - Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption; - Family support and consequent occupational exposure at work; - Negligence to preventive hygiene measures; - They seek less health services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Impact of sex and gender on COVID-19 outcomes in Europe</td>
<td>Gebhard C, Regitz-Zagrosek V, Neuhauser HK, Morgan R, Klein SL. 2020 Biol Sex Differ, England</td>
<td>Narrative review</td>
<td>- Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption; - Neglects preventive hygiene measures; - They seek less health services; - Rejection of social distance; - Family support and consequent occupational exposure at work;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Men hit harder by covid-19</td>
<td>Lawton G. 2020 New Sci, England</td>
<td>Narrative review</td>
<td>- Smoking; - Pre-existing diseases; - Neglect preventive hygiene measures - Fragile immune system</td>
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of masculinity that incites the vulnerability of men to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19 is related to family provision and their consequent exposure to work activities, which increases the risk of contagion by COVID-19. This context is related to the fact that men are socially constructed to occupy public spaces in an attempt to provide for the financial demands of the home. (23)

Such perspective is pointed out in national and international studies when they denote that from an early age boys are encouraged to occupy public spaces through exposure from childhood games to subjective symbols that instigate the freedom to come and go as well as the importance of paid work. (16,17) In the current situation, being in public spaces for the development of any activity, be it work or laser, exposes the male population to illness to COVID-19, which denotes the multi determination of the concept of vulnerability.

In the current situation, being in public spaces for the development of any activity, be it work or laser, exposes the male population to illness to COVID-19, which denotes the multi determination of the concept of vulnerability. (16,17,18,20,21) The social coexistence with these substances is ancient and cultural, being associated with social events. In addition, its consumption refers to pleasurable situations, of joy and belonging to attractive social groups, facilitating the process, mainly male, of gregariousness with other men. (24) Faced with the context of the pandemic, where there is a need for social distance, men are unable to socialize in bars and/or restaurants, making them seek other strategies for this, often opting for the organization of private parties with several people.

This socialization, and consequent violation of the rules of social distance, reveal male negligence and the preventive practices internationally advocated against COVID-19. Therefore, the male population is resistant to the fulfillment of social distance, rejecting not only the need to isolate themselves, but also the hygiene guidelines with hand washing and the use of alcohol gel. And this reinforces even more the carelessness with health on the part of men. (16,17,19,22,25)

Male identity has always been associated with carelessness in appearance, clothing and hygiene, given its connotation to virility and heterosexuality, considering such care to be strictly feminine, however, in contemporary times, these behaviors have changed. (26) Despite this, many men still associate the adoption of hygiene and care habits with the connotation of a possible homosexuality. (27) This context reveals the vulnerability axis aimed at the body's innate and adaptive immunity due to hormonal issues that play an essential role in the progression and adverse results of the new coronavirus, as shown in the selected literature. Evidence suggests substantial differences in the immune system between the sexes, in which women develop stronger immune defenses due to hormonal issues that play an essential role in the worsening of COVID-19 symptoms are more prevalent and incident in males. (16,17,20)

All these negligent behaviors, added to the unhealthy lifestyle, further weaken the male immune system, favoring the progression and adverse results of the new coronavirus, as shown in the selected literature. Evidence suggests substantial differences in the immune system between the sexes, in which women develop stronger immune defenses due to hormonal issues that play an essential role in the body's innate and adaptive immunity to a range of infectious diseases. (18-21)

Therefore, associated with high exposure to pathogens, frequent illness and low quality of life, it is found that pre-existing health conditions that are fundamental to the worsening of COVID-19 symptoms are more prevalent and incident in males. (16,17,20)

The connotation of masculinity to invulnerability, socially constructed and apprehended by men is a catalyst for the carelessness of men with their health, favoring the failure to recognize situations of alertness and the need to seek care from health services. The male difficulty in seeking medical assistance is mostly related to the fact that the functioning of health services collides with men's working hours. (29) In addition, seeking health care denotes fragility, considering that the social role of masculinity is based on strength and invulnerability, which makes it difficult to recognize your health care needs. (30)

In addition to the biological differences between men and women, the political discourse of abbreviation of the severity of symptoms, associa-
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This situation makes men underestimate the severity of the virus considering the mild symptoms initially present. However, COVID-19 is rapidly evolving, leading any individual, whether male or female, to symptoms of severity of symptoms, considering a series of individual clinical circumstances that interfere in this process, requiring intensive care, mainly due to respiratory complications. In the meantime, according to international bodies, although individual factors are considered, men are more likely to develop the most serious form of COVID-19, requiring intensive care, and the virus’s lethality is more likely.

This scenario reveals the importance of recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on men’s health, with the strengthening of prevention and awareness strategies for this public regarding the severity of this disease being of fundamental importance.

CONCLUSION

According to the scientific literature explored, the elements of masculinity that incite the vulnerability of men to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19 concern family provision and its consequent occupational exposure at work, unhealthy lifestyle (expressed by smoking and alcoholism), violation of the rules of social detachment, neglect of preventive practices such as hand washing, which reverberate in the most weakened male immune system. However, the literature also revealed that the lack of male search for health services influenced by the conviction of invulnerability and by the political discourses that alleviate the disease are also influencing the increase in male exposure and mortality by COVID-19.

One of the limitations of the study refers to the number of articles selected methodologically relating the elements of masculinity that make men vulnerable to morbidity and mortality by COVID-19, since most studies address epidemiological issues, which requires studies on this theme.

With the knowledge of the elements that favor men to illness and the consequent death from the disease, it is urgent that prevention strategies for this public be considered. Among them, the incentive to change risk factors, incentive to seek health services influenced by the political discourses that alleviate the disease are also influencing the increase in male exposure and mortality by COVID-19.

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