

# RIASE

REVISTA IBERO-AMERICANA DE SAÚDE E ENVELHECIMENTO  
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**THE NURSE'S ROLE DURING CLIMATERIC:  
IMPACT ON WOMEN'S QUALITY OF LIFE**

**ATUAÇÃO DO ENFERMEIRO DURANTE O CLIMATÉRIO:  
IMPACTO NA QUALIDADE DE VIDA DA MULHER**

**LA ACTUACIÓN DEL ENFERMERO DURANTE EL CLIMATERIO:  
IMPACTO EN LA CALIDAD DE VIDA DE LA MUJER**

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## ABSTRACT

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**Introduction:** Climacteric is a phase of aging that varies from woman to woman and involves significant changes that impact their sociocultural context. In nursing practice, the climacteric represents a strong connection to aging, influencing a woman's thoughts and behaviors.

**Objective:** Understand the nurse's role during the climacteric stage and its impact on the women's quality of life.

**Methods:** This study employed an integrative literature review. Scientific articles were searched for through the electronic platform EBSCOhost, the Brazilian Virtual Health Library (BVS), and Google Scholar, with publications ranging from 2018 to 2023. The selected articles focused on studies regarding changes caused by the climacteric and their implications on the women's quality of life.

**Results:** Six articles were selected, which revealed various changes occurring during the climacteric period that directly impact women's lives. These changes affect their quality of life, highlighting the significant role of the nursing team in providing care and support during this phase.

**Conclusion:** Climacteric is negatively associated with quality of life due to the changes experienced by women. Nursing prioritizes female care, valuing and encouraging women during this phase. Professional attention is directed towards health promotion, guided by social values, using strategies to promote an active and healthy life. Practices based on a humanistic approach result in positive changes, contributing to health-seeking attitudes that lead to an improvement in the quality of life.

**Keywords:** Aging; Climacteric; Nurse; Quality of Life; Woman.

## RESUMO

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**Introdução:** O climatério é uma fase do envelhecimento que envolve grandes alterações na mulher que vão influenciar o seu contexto sociocultural. Na prática de enfermagem o climatério representa uma ligação forte com envelhecimento influenciando o pensamento e a forma de agir da mulher.

**Objetivo:** Compreender a atuação do enfermeiro durante o climatério e o seu impacto na qualidade de vida da mulher.

**Métodos:** Revisão integrativa da literatura. Foi realizada a pesquisa de artigos científicos, através da plataforma eletrônica EBSCOhost, Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS) e Google acadêmico, publicados entre 2018 e 2023. Os artigos selecionados foram aqueles que faziam enfoque a estudos sobre alterações provocadas pelo climatério e a implicação destas na qua-

lidade de vida da mulher.

**Resultados:** foram selecionados 6 artigos que revelam a ocorrência de diversas alterações durante o período do climatério que têm implicação direta na vida da mulher causando impacto na sua qualidade de vida mediante atuação da equipa de enfermagem.

**Conclusão:** O climatério está associado negativamente à qualidade de vida devido às mudanças vivenciadas pelas mulheres. O enfermeiro prioriza o cuidado feminino valorizando e estimulando a mulher nesta fase. A sua atenção está direcionada para a promoção da saúde conduzida pelos valores da mulher, utilizando estratégias para promover uma vida ativa e saudável, numa visão humanista contribuindo para atitudes de procura de saúde que levam à melhoria da qualidade de vida.

**Palavras-chave:** Climatério; Enfermeiro; Envelhecimento; Mulher; Qualidade de Vida.

## RESUMEN

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**Introducción:** El climaterio es una etapa del envejecimiento que implica grandes cambios en la mujer que influirán en su contexto sociocultural. En la práctica de enfermería, el climaterio implica un fuerte vínculo con el envejecimiento e influye en el pensamiento y la forma de actuar de la mujer.

**Objetivo:** Comprender el rol de los enfermeros durante lo climaterio y su impacto en la calidad de vida de las mujeres.

**Métodos:** Revisión integradora de la literatura. Se realizó una búsqueda de artículos científicos, a través de la plataforma electrónica EBSCOhost, Biblioteca Virtual en Salud (BVS) y Google Scholar, publicados entre 2018 y 2023. Los artículos seleccionados fueron aquellos que se centraron en estudios sobre los cambios provocados por el climaterio y las implicaciones de éstos sobre la calidad de vida de las mujeres.

**Resultados:** Se seleccionaron 6 artículos que revelan la ocurrencia de varios cambios durante el período del climaterio que tienen implicación directa en la vida de las mujeres e impactan en su calidad de vida a través de las acciones del equipo de enfermería.

**Conclusión:** El climaterio se asocia negativamente con la calidad de vida debido a los cambios que experimentan las mujeres. El enfermero prioriza el cuidado femenino, además de valorar y estimular a la mujer en esta etapa. Su atención está dirigida a la promoción de la salud impulsada por los valores de las mujeres, utilizando estrategias para promover una vida activa y saludable, en una visión humanista, contribuyendo a actitudes de búsqueda de salud que conduzcan a una mejor calidad de vida.

**Descriptores:** Calidad de Vida; Climaterio; Enfermero; Envejecimiento; Mujer.

## INTRODUCTION

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Climacteric is a transitional phase of female aging that involves significant changes in a woman's life. Its definition relates to the transition from the reproductive period to the non-reproductive period, marking a biological milestone where women experience changes that influence their sociocultural context<sup>(1)</sup>. During this stage, biological, endocrine, and clinical transformations can be identified, making women more susceptible to various health problems. In nursing practice, it is understood that the climacteric represents a strong connection with female aging, influencing women's thinking, behavior, self-care, and self-esteem<sup>(2)</sup>.

Health care during aging should be comprehensive, considering a wide range of factors aimed at providing women with a healthier and higher quality of life<sup>(3)</sup>. This concept can be defined as an interest in life, not necessarily as a goal to be achieved, but as something to be integrated into daily living<sup>(4)</sup>. The experience during the climacteric period is really personal and varies from woman to woman<sup>(4)</sup>. Some women may experience physical symptoms, while others go through this period without any symptoms. Nevertheless, this period always involves both losses and gains, providing opportunities for new learning experiences<sup>(3)</sup>.

Nursing practices based on a humanistic approach during the climacteric phase result in changes in women's perspectives, contributing to their pursuit of health. It is important that professionals possess the ability to work in health education, contributing to changing negative beliefs about aging, as they recognize women as agents promoting their own health<sup>(5)</sup>. Health professionals should raise awareness among the population, encourage regular check-ups, and promote healthy lifestyle habits to ensure women achieve a recommended quality of life<sup>(6)</sup>. Having a positive experience throughout the climacteric phase is fundamental for healthy aging, with the goal of promoting a higher quality of life for women<sup>(4)</sup>.

### *Objective*

Issues concerning aging and quality of life are becoming increasingly prominent in today's society. The climacteric, being considered a phase of active aging, warrants particular attention due to the importance of this topic in the social context. Therefore, this research objective is: to understand the role of nurses during the climacteric and its impact on women's quality of life.

## METHODOLOGY

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### *Ethical Aspects*

No approval from the Ethics Committee was requested as this is a secondary study. In formulating the problem, the principles of clarity, objectivity, and precision were respected to ensure that the results would provide valuable insights into women's health, specifically regarding the role of nurses during the climacteric and its impact on women's quality of life. The data analysis from the selected studies was conducted in accordance with the principle of respect for the results obtained in those investigations and for the researchers involved. Bibliographic referencing was carried out in compliance with the standards of good academic and scientific practices.

### *Type of Study*

The study type used was an integrative literature review on the topic: the role of nurses during the climacteric and its impact on women's quality of life. This methodology allows for a synthesis of results and a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the subject. The six stages recommended for this methodology were used: 1) Identification of the topic and selection of the hypothesis or research question for the integrative review; 2) Establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies/sample or literature search; 3) Definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies/studies categorization; 4) Studies evaluation included in the integrative review; 5) Interpretation of the results; 6) Presentation of the review/knowledge synthesis<sup>(7)</sup>.

### *Methodological Procedures*

According to the previously described objective, which served as the guiding basis for the Integrative Literature Review, a research question was formulated using the PICO mnemonic, where (P) stands for the target population, (I) for the type of intervention, (C) for comparisons, and (O) for outcomes. Based on this structure, the following guiding question was developed: How does aging during the climacteric (Intervention) influence the quality of life (Outcomes) of women (Population)? With the PICO question formulated, data collection on the topic under study followed.

A search for scientific articles was conducted using electronic platforms in health-related databases: EBSCOhost, the Brazilian Virtual Health Library (BVS), and Google Scholar. Scientific articles published between 2018 and 2023 were searched using the following keywords: woman, climacteric, aging, discomforts, quality of life. Inclusion criteria were defined as: articles available in full text, published in Portuguese, Spanish, or English, and all

types of articles. Exclusion criteria were articles focused on aging in other phases of a woman's life. Applying these criteria resulted in 32 articles, and after removing duplicates, 20 articles remained for analysis. Following the reading of titles and abstracts, and when necessary, the full text of the articles, 6 articles were selected, as shown in the flowchart in Figure 1<sup>7</sup>. The articles that were selected provided the best approach to the chosen topic to achieve the objective of this research. The chosen articles focused on studies about the changes caused by the climacteric and its impact on women's quality of life.

## RESULTS

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The results of the literature review will be analyzed to compare the selected studies, followed by a discussion based on thematic content analysis. After analyzing the six articles, the results are presented in Chart 1<sup>7</sup> to facilitate their interpretation.

## DISCUSSION

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The aging of the population is a global reality that highlights the challenge of establishing health promotion measures aimed at improving life expectancy and quality of life<sup>(1)</sup>. From the perspective of women's health, this situation is particularly significant. During the phase of female aging, women go through the climacteric. This is a transitional stage characterized by significant biological changes, with the most commonly accepted definition being the transition from the reproductive to the non-reproductive period, serving as a biological milestone that is both characteristic and controversial<sup>(2)</sup>. Women experience profound changes in their social relationships, personal lives, careers, and spirituality, directly influencing their context<sup>(2)</sup>.

During this phase, several biological, endocrine, and clinical transformations can be identified as a result of the progressive decrease in ovarian hormone production, namely estrogen and progesterone, resulting in physical and psychological changes that can affect women's quality of life, making them more susceptible to certain health problems<sup>(1)</sup>. The symptoms of the climacteric will directly impact the quality of life of women, with a strong tendency towards compromise, associated with factors related to aging<sup>(3)</sup>.

The concept of quality of life can be guided by an interest in life that has always been present in humanity's aspirations. This designation is not meant to be achieved but rather applied in daily life through the effort and dedication of individuals or groups. The meaning of life lies in the pursuit of quality care according to each person's possibilities. The scope of the topic of aging and quality of life led the World Health Organization to focus on health policies within the field of active aging, aimed at improving the quality of life as people age<sup>(1)</sup>.

In nursing practice, it is understood that the transformations of the climacteric represent a strong connection with female aging, influencing their thinking and behavior towards self-care and self-esteem<sup>(2)</sup>. The experience during the climacteric period varies among women. Its impact is of utmost importance as it involves emotional, physical, biological, and psychosocial changes that can interfere with their quality of life<sup>(4)</sup>. Some women may experience physical symptoms, while others go through this period without any symptoms; however, this period always involves losses and gains, providing opportunities for new learning experiences. It is considered a possibility that socioeconomic, environmental, racial, nutritional, as well as genetic and lifestyle factors, play a role in explaining the observed variations during this phase. This phase can affect and modify women's quality of life in various areas such as their personal routine, work, family, and interpersonal relationships. The lack of preparation and knowledge about this stage can lead to difficulties in coping with challenges, directly affecting self-esteem, relationships, and the quality of life of these women<sup>(3)</sup>.

The climacteric is a period marked by obstacles and challenges and women in this phase often feel weak and with a significant impact on their psychological well-being. During this stage of life, many diseases can *muitas doenças como* cancer, depression and obesity. The decrease in hormonal levels is often mistaken for fatigue which is why many women may not seek specialized care. Since depression is experienced by many women during this period, psychological support and routine check-ups help overcome the climacteric stage in an optimized process. Additionally, family support plays a crucial role, as many women find their motivation within the family nucleus<sup>(6)</sup>.

Aging is an individual process, and there is a need to redefine the concept in society. Psychosocial and cultural issues have a significant influence on women's lives during aging, experiencing constant conflicts. The loss of youthfulness, physical changes such as hair loss, wrinkles, decreased strength and muscle mass, are elements that impact women's self-image, causing psychological distress<sup>(4)</sup>. Physiological changes leading to symptoms during the climacteric ultimately require women to readjust to understand their new bodies. The aging process may entail losing bodily beauty, seduction capacity, and altering how one perceives sexuality, surrounded by the prejudice of aging<sup>(1,2)</sup>. During the climacteric, it is essen-

tial to consider women's complaints in a holistic manner, taking into account biological, psychological, and personality changes. Psychological symptoms are often manifested through anxiety and feelings of fear or tension<sup>(3)</sup>.

In relation to the physical symptoms of climacteric, these factors are already well documented. Climacteric is a phase in which various chronic cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, among others, can be triggered, affecting the quality and life expectancy of women. These events can be classified as short- and long-term. In the short term, vasomotor symptoms such as hot flashes and palpitations are the most frequent, along with manifestations of genitourinary system atrophy, vaginal dryness, skin and mucous membrane dryness, decreased libido, and psychological changes such as mood swings, fatigue, insomnia, and a higher prevalence of depression<sup>1</sup>. Despite these symptoms manifesting in different intensities, they entail consequences that can affect women's lives. Furthermore, in the long term, pathologies such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular diseases become evident<sup>(4,8)</sup>.

With the increase in average life expectancy observed in recent years, a longer life presents greater challenges in terms of health care for aging individuals. Having a pleasant climacteric phase is a fundamental circumstance for active and healthy aging. In this context, the importance of policies on active aging is highlighted. It is important for the public, private sectors, and societal institutions to provide adequate assistance during this phase of life<sup>(1)</sup>.

Given the changing population profile regarding aging, nursing professionals stand out as those closest to the population, being attentive to the role of valuing the individual beyond their biological aspect, offering preventive and health promotion measures related to women's health care<sup>(1)</sup>. It is clear that the climacteric corresponds to a phase of changes, making it necessary for professionals to have a good understanding of this phase in a woman's life. The senior female population requires differentiated assistance, and the nursing workforce must provide care corresponding to the needs of this age group. The nursing professional plays a crucial role in women's health, providing specialized care and humanized assistance, promoting the physical, psychological, and social well-being of women during the climacteric<sup>(8)</sup>.

Nurses have an important role in the overall change in care practice, as their skills are based on health education and care focused on human needs such as safety and comfort. They are a key contributor to women's health needs, applying humanized and qualified care to promote adherence to habits and practices that reflect an improvement in the health and quality of life of these women<sup>(3)</sup>. The perception reported by women about the physical and emotional changes in this stage needs to be properly understood so that the nursing team emphasizes the listening process and educational actions<sup>(1)</sup>.



The development of nursing practices based on a humanistic vision results in positive changes, contributing to health-seeking behavior and adherence to the therapeutic plan. It is important for professionals to have the capacity and skills to work in health education through an interdisciplinary approach, contributing to a change in negative beliefs about aging, including the climacteric phase. A more effective approach is achieved through dialogue with active listening and empathy, facilitating the process of verbalization such as expressing emotions and thoughts, and exchanging knowledge and experiences. Health education becomes an essential tool for transmitting information<sup>(3)</sup>.

Health care professionals should raise awareness among the population and encourage women to undergo routine examinations, adopt healthy lifestyles to provide women with a recommended quality of life<sup>(6)</sup>. Family members should also be included in the process of understanding and monitoring transient symptoms as the family is considered the cornerstone of relationships and should be valued<sup>(1)</sup>.

Nurses have the skills to guide women in self-care during the climacteric phase, using strategies that promote the development of actions that encourage women to act as protagonists of their health. This involves valuing self-care and adherence to daily habits and practices that will result in improvements in health and quality of life, empowering them to reflect on and discuss their difficulties in this complex phase<sup>(3-8)</sup>.

Understanding the implications of this phase and its impact on female identity is a challenging process, as the climacteric, like aging itself, evokes new feelings. A prolonged life can overcome the negative consequences of aging by adopting necessary care regarding the changes that come with time. Having a pleasant experience throughout the climacteric phase is fundamental for healthy aging, making it essential to develop public policies that intertwine the principles of active aging with the goal of promoting quality of life<sup>(1)</sup>.

### *Study Limitations*

As limitations of this Integrative Literature Review are related to the sample of articles used, as only free and online articles were included, which may have resulted in the exclusion of some relevant studies related to the topic. Another aspect was the language-based search, as only articles in Portuguese, Spanish, and English were considered, which may have resulted in the loss of important studies in other languages.

### *Contributions to Nursing*

This Integrative Literature Review will allow for reflection on the importance of aging during the climacteric with quality of life in women, reinforcing the prominent role that nurses play in transmitting information, thus making significant contributions to care provision, contributing to health gains. It is important to educate the population, reinforcing scientific evidence, in order to bring benefits to their daily lives, reducing health care costs and improving their quality of life. This scientific evidence is important so that nurses can recognize the physiological and pathological adaptations related to aging in the climacteric phase and thus be able to adjust their interventions to generate health gains as a result of prevention and health promotion.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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The climacteric is negatively associated with quality of life due to the changes experienced by women, influencing their thoughts and attitudes with an impact on self-care and self-esteem, as well as the development of disease and discomfort.

Women report that the climacteric influences aging, as it is in this phase that senescence begins, with various changes in their lifestyle, personal history, and family life. The nursing profession, through its professional competencies, prioritizes female care, valuing and encouraging women to understand this as a natural phase of the life cycle. Nursing practices based on a humanistic approach result in positive changes, contributing to health-seeking behaviors in women and improving their quality of life.

The way nurses influence women's health to provide them with a better quality of life is through actions that encourage them to act as protagonists of their health. This involves educational actions for prevention and health promotion, emphasizing the value of self-care and adherence to daily habits and practices. These actions include adherence to the therapeutic plan, encouragement to undergo routine examinations, adoption of healthy lifestyle habits, and providing information about transient symptoms during this phase. Nurses achieve this through qualified and humanized care, promoting the physical, psychological, and social well-being of women.

All these measures will result in improvements in health and consequently in their quality of life, empowering women to reflect on and overcome their difficulties during this complex phase. It is also noted that nursing interventions during the climacteric phase need constant evolution in the field of care to promote better living conditions for women dur-

ing this period. In this sense, the present study aims to build new knowledge and discussion about nursing care for women's health, raising awareness about the importance of the topic and promoting quality care.

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**Authors' contributions/Contributos das autoras**

AG: Study coordination, study design, data collection, storage, and analysis, review and discussion of results.

AF: Study design, data analysis, review, and discussion of results.

All authors have read and agreed with the published version of the manuscript.

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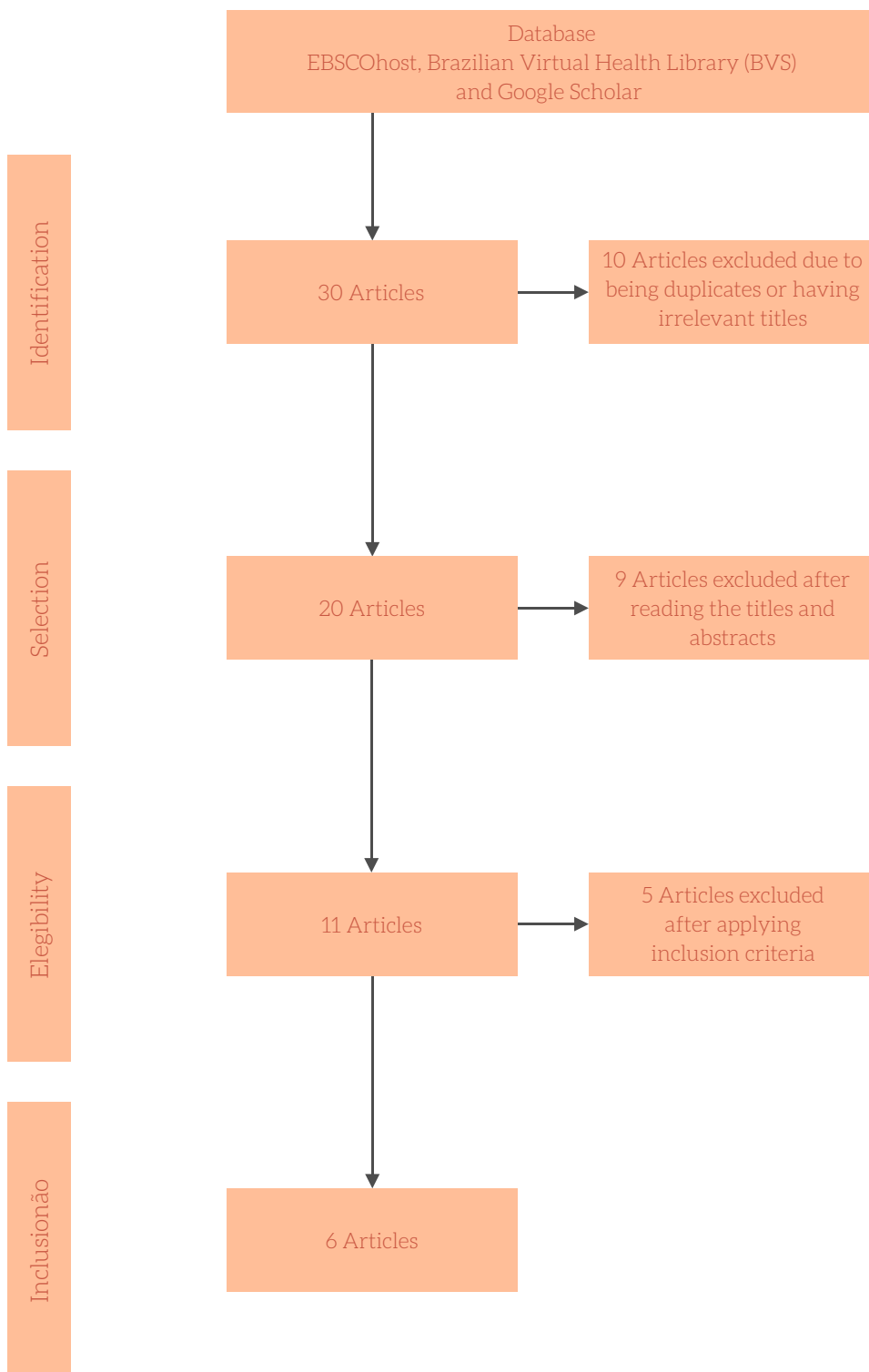


Figure 1 - PRISMA Flowchart of the Research, adapted from PRISMA (2021).<sup>5</sup>

Chart 1 - Extracted data from the analyzed articles. →<sup>6</sup>

Authors, Year, Objectives	Conclusions
<p>Soares, G., Sá, S., R, S., Souza, I., Penna, L., &amp; Zveiter, M. (2018). Objective: To analyze the knowledge produced about climacteric, family, and aging.</p>	<p>With the changing profile of health service users during aging, nurses stand out, proposing preventive and health promotion measures related to women's health care. Aging presents the challenge of emphasizing the importance of preventive and health promotion measures to enhance quality and prolong life. The perception of emotional and physical changes during the climacteric phase needs to be acknowledged and understood so that health strategies can be developed. Nursing interventions are essential during this stage of a woman's life.</p>
<p>Almeida, S; Araújo; Bento; Campelo; Marques; Netto; Rascon; Ribeiro; Trigo; Silva, A; Silva, N; Souza; Santos, L; Santos, E &amp; Vieira (2023). Objective: To reflect on the challenges of the climacteric and menopause on women's quality of life.</p>	<p>During the climacteric, various transformations occur due to the decrease in ovarian hormone production, resulting in physical and psychological changes that impact women's quality of life, making them more prone to various health problems. Despite knowledge about hormonal changes during menopause, there are many uncertainties about how they affect women during the climacteric. Women's quality of life during this phase is influenced by hormonal symptoms, depending on their severity, as well as by other emotional and cultural factors related to human aging.</p>
<p>Araújo; Barbosa; Brasil; Cordeiro; Ferreira; Júnior; Patrício; Pereira &amp; Silva, 2020. Objective: To present the experiences and activities lived by nursing students during the supervised internship in women's health, focusing on comprehensive care for women during the climacteric phase.</p>	<p>Climacteric is characterized by symptoms whose intensity and manifestation differ from woman to woman, influencing personal coping capacity due to factors such as prejudice and taboos. It is essential to have guidance from a professional competent in health education and women's care during this phase. Nurses mobilize health education strategies to promote self-care for the difficulties experienced during the climacteric, capable of fostering positive health behaviors in women. The development of humanistic practices results in positive changes in bonding, interaction, and support, leading to therapeutic adherence.</p>
<p>Martine &amp; Souza, 2022. Objective: To encourage women to prevent and take care of their health during the climacteric period, and to highlight the diseases caused by inadequate treatment, lack of professional assistance, and poor nutritional quality, while providing appropriate nutrition with nutritional monitoring.</p>	<p>The climacteric is a period marked by obstacles and challenges in a woman's daily life, during which she may experience psychological distress related to her body and mental health. Diseases such as depression, cancer, and weight gain may appear during this period. The lack of information is a complex process of great concern for health professionals, as it may result in non-adherence to gynecology appointments, routine exams, and screenings. Hormonal changes may be masked by fatigue, which justifies the lack of seeking specialized care. Depression is a frequent phenomenon during this period, and there is a need for psychological support and routine check-ups. Women should be provided with greater encouragement during this period, while not disregarding the importance of family support.</p>

Chart 1 - Extracted data from the analyzed articles. ←↵

Authors, Year, Objectives	Conclusions
<p>Filho &amp; Lopes, 2022. Objective: To analyze the symptoms and quality of life of women in the climacteric phase attending primary health care.</p>	<p>In the past decade, several studies have shown that there is still no global consensus on the climacteric and quality of life. Different women may experience this phase differently, as cultural, biological, and psychosocial factors can also influence the occurrence of clinical manifestations. Considering that women in this phase are more exposed to various clinical conditions that influence their health in a biopsychosocial aspect, this can affect the quality of their daily lives. Indeed, it becomes essential to evaluate the quality of life during the climacteric in terms of interpersonal relationships, self-perception, and morbidity/mortality The climacteric highlights an important milestone in a woman's life, with quality of life gaining increasing prominence.</p>
<p>Cavalcante; Guimarães; Marcelino; Pereira; Sampaio; Santiago &amp; Valente (2023). Objective: To analyze the role of the nurse in the climacteric regarding its physiological and social aspects.</p>	<p>The climacteric is a phase of changes and adaptations, making it important for health care professionals to have a better understanding of women during this phase. There is a need within health care services for differentiated care and a nursing team that provides assistance tailored to the needs of this age group. Nurses should provide specialized care and humanized attention that promotes the physical, psychological, and social well-being of women experiencing this phase. The family serves as the foundation for a world of diverse relationships and needs to be valued, as it can alleviate vulnerability by demystifying stigmas and prejudices.</p>