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### Review article

# Quality of life of the woman carrier of endometriosis: systematized review<sup>☆</sup>



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#### ABSTRACT

Endometriosis is a progressive and chronic disease characterized by the presence of endometrial tissue outside the womb location. The main symptoms are dyspareunia, dysmenorrhea and infertility, and affects mainly women in fertile age. It causes numerous problems in various social, psychological and emotional levels. Its incidence ranges from 5 to 15% in the female population of reproductive age. The aim of the study is to describe the women's quality of life with endometriosis and related factors. It is about a systematized review study conducted in electronic databases SciELO and PubMed. The descriptors used were "endometriosis" and "quality of life", using the advanced search strategy with the Boolean AND. The research period was from March to October 2015. The inclusion criteria were extended to articles published in the last five years in Portuguese and English. The exclusion criteria involved non-original studies, case series, commentaries and editorials. The search resulted in 18 articles divided into three categories. The results indicate that women with endometriosis have quality of life affected, either in the physical, social or mental level. Understanding family members and partner represents an improvement in this confrontation, being, therefore, a specific intervention to improve the quality of life of women with this disease.

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#### Qualidade de vida da mulher portadora de endometriose: revisão sistematizada

#### RESUMO

A endometriose é uma doença progressiva e crônica caracterizada pela presença de tecido endometrial em localização extrauterina. Os principais sintomas são dispareunia, dismenorrea e infertilidade, acomete, principalmente, mulheres em idade fértil. Acarreta inúmeros problemas nos diversos âmbitos social, psicológico e emocional. Sua incidência varia de

##### Palavras-chave:

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5 a 15% na população feminina em idade reprodutiva. O objetivo do estudo é descrever a qualidade de vida da mulher com endometriose e os fatores relacionados. Trata-se de estudo de revisão sistematizada feito nas bases de dados eletrônicas SciELO e PubMed. Os descritores usados foram “endometriosis” e “quality of life”, com a estratégia de busca avançada com o boleano AND. O período de pesquisa foi de março a outubro de 2015. Os critérios de inclusão se estenderam a artigos publicados nos últimos cinco anos em português e inglês. Os critérios de exclusão envolveram estudos não originais, série de casos, comentários e editoriais. A busca resultou em 18 artigos divididos em três categorias. Os resultados indicam que mulheres com endometriose têm qualidade de vida afetada, seja no bem-estar físico, social e mental. A compreensão dos parentes e do parceiro representa melhoria nesse enfrentamento. É, portanto, uma intervenção específica para melhoria da qualidade de vida nas mulheres portadoras dessa doença.

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## Introduction

Endometriosis is an estrogen-dependent disease characterized by the growth of endometrial tissue that can be evidenced in the extrauterine ovarian, uterine ligaments, the sigmoid colon, the peritoneal pelvis, the cervix and rarely extending to the pleura and pericardium. In the words of Gao et al.,<sup>1</sup> the disease is defined by the stromal implant and/or extrauterine endometrial glandular epithelium in location

Some patients with endometriosis are asymptomatic. However, most symptoms have different intensities, the main being dysmenorrhoea, chronic pelvic pain, infertility, deep dyspareunia, or cyclic intestinal and urinary symptoms, such as pain or bleeding when defecating or urinating during menstruation.<sup>2</sup>

In the United States, endometriosis is the third leading cause of hospitalization for gynecological reasons.<sup>3</sup> The reasons are estimated to occur in at least 5.5 million women affected by this disease in the United States and Canada.<sup>4</sup> Its incidence in different studies ranges from 5 to 15% in women in the reproductive age and 2–5% in postmenopausal women.<sup>5</sup> The highest rates of endometriosis are found in infertile women, with variations from 5 to 50%.<sup>6</sup>

The typical endometriosis triad (dyspareunia, dysmenorrhoea and infertility) has a direct impact on the lives of women in different areas, whether social, physical or psychological.<sup>7</sup> Pain has a cyclic nature and is, therefore, repeated and prone to worsening condition in every cycle, interfering with women's health from a holistic point of view.

The deep dyspareunia, in turn, is another symptom that will make the diagnosis of this condition. It will focus on sexual and reproductive health of women, limiting their sexual activity and consequently changing their social and psychological dynamics.<sup>8</sup>

However, infertility is the biggest challenge to be faced by women with endometriosis. The inability to bear a child or to maintain a pregnancy may have a larger impact on the lives of patients who yearn to have a child.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, it is evident that the symptoms of endometriosis are affecting the quality of life of these women, causing difficulties in daily activities and social life, altering the general health

and personal relationships. The sense of frustration or uncertainty about their reproductive capacity is noteworthy in this context.

Given the range of factors triggered by endometriosis, it must examine the quality of life of the women affected, how the symptoms of the disease have impacted their daily life. Because of the great repercussion of endometriosis on different aspects of life and health of women, it is necessary to understand the confrontation mechanisms of the disease for patients as well as the impact on the quality of their lives. This can determine the improvement of care and the quality of humanization addressed to women from diagnosis to treatment.

The high and increasing rates of endometriosis make relevant research on the subject, considering that its carriers are seen in all walks of life. Given the above, this study has the scope to describe the impact of endometriosis on the quality of life of women.

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## Method

Systematized review study of the literature on quality of life of women with endometriosis was undertaken. We proceeded to search the literature through online databases of the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE), accessed by PubMed between March and October 2015, limiting the articles published between January 2010 and October 10th 2015.

We used the following key words for searching the PubMed database, “endometriosis” (descriptor advanced [Term MeSH]) and “quality of life” (descriptor advanced [Term and MeSH]). In addition to the MeSH descriptor it was decided to include the descriptor in Health Sciences (DeCS) [“endometriosis” AND “quality of life”] in Advanced search strategy. The search strategy and the articles obtained in the search were reviewed on two separate occasions to ensure the proper selection of the sample. Similar search strategy was held in SciELO database, using the equivalent descriptors in Portuguese.

Analysis of articles followed predetermined eligibility criteria. The following inclusion criteria were adopted: (a) items that had the title of at least one combination of the terms

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