Abstract
The aims of this paper were to identify the principles that guide the nursing practice and to discuss limits and possibilities faced by a nursing team while working at the health services offered in the Rio de Janeiro State Penitentiary System. In order to reach the suggested goals, it has been written a descriptive study with qualitative approach. The scenario was a Penitentiary General Hospital and there were interviewed 30 professionals nursing interviewed. The data was collected through a technique of interview. The results showed that care practice and assistance relationship are the principles which guide the nurse’s performance at a Penitentiary Hospital Unit. It has been also showed that the possibilities are the same as the ones we see beyond walls, and that the presence of a penitentiary agent, as well as the dangerous, are limitations for the nursing practice.

Keywords
Health, Nursing, Prisons