Vaccine refusal/hesitancy—the ethical point of view

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Background
In 2019, WHO classified vaccine hesitancy as one of the top 10 threats to global health. Vaccination is an area of excellence in nursing that has gained a new focus and has become a
challenge in the provision of care and in the management field. Vaccine hesitation raises questions about mandatory vaccination, individual versus collective freedom that are highlighted in the current context due to the emergence of new vaccines. In this paper, we want to analyze and update knowledge about vaccines hesitation from an ethical and bioethical perspective.

Methods
A combination of literature reviews on vaccine refusal/ hesitancy, ethics and COVID-19 vaccine confidence, accessed on SciELO and PubMed databases and analysis of documents from General Directorate of Health and Ordem dos Enfermeiros (National Nurses Association).

Results
Vaccination programs aim is a collective protection. The desirable effects at individual level do not have the same ethical value at collective level, leading to cost-benefit imbalances. Moral conflicts between the individual and the collective, cost-benefit imbalances and the insufficiency of bioethics principles, lead us to the use of other moral values and principles, such as responsibility, solidarity and social justice, as a tool for ethical reflection problems related to COVID-19 vaccines.

Conclusions
There are no perfect solutions to ethical dilemmas and some optimal solutions could depend the context. In a pandemic situation, one of the most relevant ethical issues is the herd immunity since it leaves public health at risk. Equity and the principle of justice in vaccination campaign are shown daily in the nursing profession.

Keywords: Covid-19, ethics, vaccine refusal/hesitancy, vaccine confidence.