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Are Our Nurses in Hospitals Ready for the Unpredictable?

Paige Wampole, Student Nurse

INTRODUCTION

Nurses go through many years of education before they start working in hospitals, but their education is never-ending. Unpredictable is defined as “not able to be known” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). During their career, nurses will continue their education and knowledge better adapt the unpredictable. Nurses in hospitals continue their education so they can be prepared, meaning ready to do or deal with, for any event or disaster that may occur within their communities.

Efforts made by international organizations such as International Council for Nurses (ICN) and World Health Organization (WHO) have developed the framework to enhance nursing competency of nurses who intricate in disaster response (WHO, 2020). Recent studies have shown that continuing education and multimodality simulation approaches enhance the competency of hospital nurses in disaster response (Noh et al. 2020). Disasters can be unpredictable, and a new disaster can occur that have never happened before, so it is important that our nursing staff is ready.

SIGNIFICANCE

Disasters can be a multitude of things:

- Natural Disasters
- Pandemics/ Epidemic
- Man-made Disasters
- 1994-2013
 - 6,873 Disasters
 - 1.35 Million Deaths
 - Earthquakes were the deadliest disaster killing 750,000 people (Wahlstrom, Guha-Sapir, 2015)
- Average Yearly Natural Disaster Death Toll
 - Average: 60,000 deaths
 - Or, 0.1% of total global deaths
- Outliers Years and Effects:
 - 1983-1985 Ethiopian famine
 - 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake & Tsunami
 - 2008 Cyclone Nargis (Myanmar)
 - 2010 Earthquake (Haiti)
 - Effect: All 4 examples averaged 0.4% of total global deaths

(Ritchie, Roser, 2019)

POSITION STATEMENT

Disaster training and education has led to nurses being as prepared as possible to give the most beneficial care necessary to disaster victims.



(Ida Moffett School of Nursing, 2005)

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

Currently, nurses are being challenged to care for large amounts of patients suffering from COVID-19 causing a multitude of side effects that nurses we are learning about day by day (Flood et. al. 2020). Nurses cared for patients by proper preparation such as:

- Personal Protective Equipment, or PPE
- How to limit contact when warranted.

(Roizen, 2020)

After Hurricane Katrina, The American Hospital Association proposed that all health care agencies update their disaster plans to implement better and more efficient protocols (Barry et al. 2007)., such as:

- Surveillance and Detection
- Medical and Pharmaceuticals Supplies
- Facility Disaster Management Team
- Mental Health Resources
- Cost (Noh et. al. 2020)

In previous decades, natural disasters killed millions of people, but have since declined to less than 60,000 per year due to our preparations both structurally and medically. Also, disasters tend to affect low-income areas worse, where health care is not as advanced as other, wealthier areas, such as the United States for example. Statistics show that people in low-income areas are 3x more likely to die in a natural disaster than those in higher-income.

(Ritchie, Roser, 2019)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The first step towards preparedness for disasters is education. It is vital to know who needs to know how to do what, everyone in the disaster setting has a job to do and each person needs to know what their job is to be effect in the emergency situation. It is important to use a multimodality comprehensive approach to teaching nursing staff on disaster response because disaster responses are composed of a broad spectrum of elements such as (Noh et al. 2020):

- Triage
 - Incident Command Systems
 - Special Disaster Situations
 - Chain of Command Protocols
 - Special Skills and Equipment Operation
- Nurses and hospital staff need to be trained on how to use;
- Special hazards protective equipment
 - Alternative life saving devices that are used on the daily job.

Most hospitals now have emergency teams and protocols what are followed in order to be efficient in the plan of care during a disaster. Communication of this plan and the hospital trainings that nurses are required to do, help to increase the effectiveness of disaster plans (Noh et al. 2020).



(RNC Magazine, 2020)

CONCLUSION

Nurses are prepared in disaster situations due to their disaster training and education. This nation has experienced many life altering disasters and surely will experience more in the future. That is why nurses have been trained and educated in disaster occurrences to be able to provide front-line care to those in need.

The healthcare systems were capable of establishing a framework to enhance nursing competency in disaster response (WHO, 2020) due to organizations like:

- ICN (International Council for Nurses)
- WHO (World Health Organization)
- CDC (Center for Disease Control)

Nurses are also becoming more efficient in adaptability/change and implement care based on the disaster’s occurrence. Nurses understanding of PPE within the COVID-19 pandemic greatly reduced the spread of the virus which could be much worse if not for the nurses’ preparation. (Flood et al. 2020).

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