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A Model Curriculum for Improving the Clinical Capabilities of Public Health Nurses for Acute Care Applications during Disasters and Public Health Emergencies

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Study/Objective: Improve the ability and willingness of health department nurses to provide patient care during disasters.

Background: Public Health Nurses are a critical component of public health preparedness plans, often intended to provide direct patient care that is outside the scope of their day-to-day public health nursing roles. When analyzing drills and exercises in New York, it was noted that when asked to perform clinical care of acutely ill victims of disasters, there was a marked decrease in both the comfort and willingness of nurses to participate in a disaster response, or even a disaster exercise, that might expose an individual's weakness in clinical skills proficiency.

Methods: A needs assessment was conducted and an 8-hour clinical skills training for public health nurses was designed and taught by experienced critical care and emergency department nurse educators and paramedics. This course was delivered in two 4-hour modules and focused on specific areas of low skill confidence as reported by health department and medical reserve corps nurses. The training consisted of a didactic introduction, followed by clinical skills stations where task trainers and simulation was used to practice psychomotor skills.

Results: Following the didactic and especially the psychomotor education on triage, physical assessment and clinical skills we found to be low to moderate increases in self-efficacy for didactic training, and moderate to high increases following skills training. The most reported comment by participants in subjective evaluation was a desire for more frequency of training in these skills.

Conclusion: Although public health nurses do not perform acute care or certain clinical skills during their day-to-day nursing roles, implementing pre-event training programs designed to re-familiarize experienced nurses with certain clinical skills or procedures results in an increase in self-efficacy and an improvement in the willingness of these nurses to act in their intended clinical roles during a disaster or public health emergency.

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The Need to Increase Disaster Nursing Education in the Undergraduate Curriculum

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Study/Objective: To measure the effect of what disaster nursing education has on the attitudes and skills of undergraduate nursing students.

Background: Nursing is the nation's largest health care profession with more than 3.1 million registered nurses nationwide. Nurses possess a wealth of medical knowledge and communication skills, yet many don't know how to care for a person outside their clinical environment. If a disaster occurs and a nurse wants to help, they may not know where to go or be allowed to participate due to lack of disaster response training. Some medical schools require their students to be trained in disaster medicine and preparedness. Nursing schools designate little, if any, time to the role nurses' play in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. This lack of education translates into a reluctance for nurses to volunteer when a disaster occurs, which may lead to poorer health outcomes for victims.

Methods: The study is a sequential explanatory design. The subjects are undergraduate students enrolled in the Community Health course at the Texas A&M College of Nursing. Using the World Health Organization (WHO) International Council of Nursing Disaster Nursing Competencies as a reference, four to five competencies not currently addressed in the curriculum will be identified. The students' skills and critical thinking ability will be quantitatively assessed. Didactic, scenario, and simulation-based education concerning disaster preparedness, response, and recovery will be provided. Quantitative reassessment of the students skills and critical thinking ability will then take place. Focus groups will be conducted to qualitatively capture the students' perception of self-efficacy before, during, and after the experience.

Results: Expected outcomes will reflect the findings found from the literature in that increasing this disaster nursing education will benefit the student and the community in which the future nurse will work.

Conclusion: Continued research may influence more nursing schools and colleges to increase disaster nursing education in their curricula.

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Emergency Nursing in Mass Casualty Incidents: Effects on Staff Turnover at a Large Suburban Hospital Emergency Department

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Study/Objective: Emergency nurses have one of the highest turnover rates in healthcare. A systematic review indicated that