

The history of disaster nursing: Developments from Nightingale to the 21st century.

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Aim of the Study:

The aim is to understand the experiences of nurses working in international disaster management; to explore the lived experience of nurses in the context of disaster response, examining their roles, responsibilities, experiences and outcomes.

The aim of this poster is to explore the developments in the field of disaster nursing to provide context to the history of the profession and specialty; mapping key changes in policy, practice and outcomes.

Background:

- Nurses constitute the largest proportion of the healthcare workforce globally and are often frontline
- Nurses have a rich history in performing their duty both domestically and internationally throughout history.
- The role they play in disaster response had not been formally recognised until the publication of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Disaster Nursing Competencies Framework (2009).
- Early records of disaster management and battlefield trauma reach back to the Napoleonic Era.
- Triage was a novel idea developed by Baron Dominique Jean Larrey in the 1790s (Surgeon in Chief to Napoleon's Imperial Guard)
- 20th Century saw the birth of modern medicine, alongside the industrial revolution, leading to advancements in the concept of disaster medicine/nursing.
- Disaster management has strong military roots, particularly when examining the evolution of the profession of nursing throughout the Crimean War, World War 1 & 2.
- The nursing profession has made significant progression throughout the 20th and 21st century
- Specific references to the term 'disaster nurse' are absent in the literature, the scope of practice and roles fulfilled throughout history indicate a different narrative (Kerfoot 2019)

Method:

Using a qualitative interpretive approach, an historical review was conducted.

A hermeneutic approach was chosen to enable contextualisation of the relationship of the nursing profession and disasters, to enable interpretation of these parallel developments in order to develop a holistic understanding (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1962).

Inclusion criteria:

- ☑ English language
- ☑ Publications 1780 – current.
- ☑ Notable figures of nursing that focus on disaster nursing
- ☑ Articles reporting developments in the nursing profession in disaster management in its broad historical context

Exclusion criteria:

- ☑ Book reviews
- ☑ Course implementation papers (education focus) that lacked developmental/historical focus
- ☑ Memorials

The following search terms and MESH headings were used: disaster* OR humanitarian* OR war AND nurse* OR nursing AND history OR historic* OR development. MESH headings were also used for the relevant databases: (MH "Disasters+") and (MH "History of Nursing")

Results:

PRISMA Flow Chart

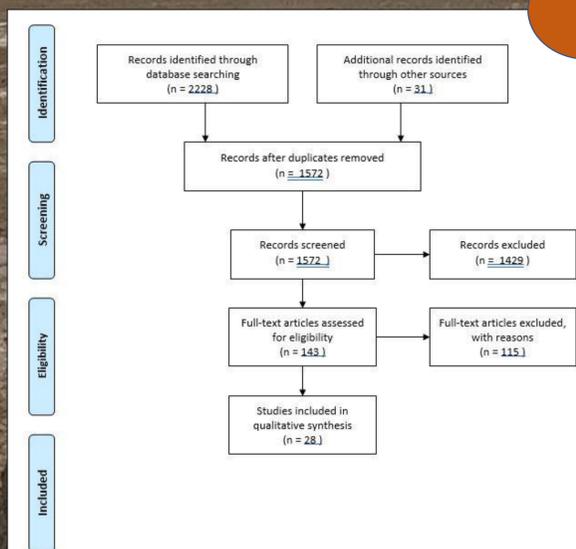


Table 1. Key historical milestones that affected nursing and disasters:

- **1887: Ethel Gordon Fenwick founded British Nurses Association (BNA).**
- **1899 - 1909: ICN, the Foundation Years**
- **1919: The Nurses Registration Act (UK) passed**
- **1920: General Nursing Council (UK) formed**
- **1945: Formation of the United Nations (UN)**
- **1948: Formation of the World Health Organization, ICN and WHO began collaboration**
- **1994: International classification for nursing practice (ICNP) from the ICN**
- **2000: International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)**
- **2005-2015: Hyogo Framework for Action (UN)**
- **2009: ICN Disaster Nursing Competency Framework**
- **2015-2030: The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN)**
- **2019: ICN Disaster Nursing Competencies 2.0**

Discussion:

- Nurses roles are multi-dimensional and are often key in managing infectious diseases, social support, medical care and recovery/rehabilitation (Kerfoot, 2019).
- A strong 'sense of duty' or moral drive to respond in times of disaster exists with nurses throughout history
- The literature heavily documents the preparedness and response phases of a disaster, with an emerging reference to the role of the nurse in mitigation and recovery in modern practice (Kerfoot, 2019).
- Increasing emphasis on disaster risk reduction and prevention in the last 30 years
- Many argue that Florence Nightingale revolutionised the profession, thrusting it into the 20th Century
- She adapted clinical practice aligned to scientific developments in sanitation, food and hygiene, ventilation and swift administration of medication and treatment.
- It was not until the turn of the 21st Century that the appearance of nurses emerged again strategically, through the developments made in the ICN, World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations (UN).
- Nursing Midwifery Council updated 'Future nurse: Standards of proficiency for registered nurses' (2018) – inclusion of disaster terminology for the first time in history.
- The renewal of the disaster nursing profession with the ICN Disaster Nursing Competency Framework (2009), reignited the value of nurses in all phases of disaster response – reviewed and updated 2019.

What is a disaster?
"Natural (geophysical, hydrological, climatological, meteorological or biological) or human-induced (armed conflict, famine, environmental degradation, chemical or radiological events). This can be in the form of an earthquake, volcano, tsunami, drought, cyclone, disease epidemic/pandemic, as well as conflict and biological warfare"
- UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), 2020

Conclusions:

Nurses have spent centuries building the trust and legitimacy of the profession. All nurses are disaster nurses and planners, and it is in times of disaster that we truly see the role of the nurse emerge.

Whilst significant advancements have occurred in the last 30 years, further research and representation of the profession at a strategic and political level could improve the mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery of any community.

References:

- Gadamer H. (1989) *Truth and Method*, London: Sheed and Ward.
Heidegger M. (1962) *Being and Time*, Oxford: Blackwell.
Kerfoot KM. (2019) Chaos, Teamwork, Compassion, and Leadership: Disasters and Nursing's Finest Hours. *Nursing Economic\$* 37: 265 – 267.
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