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Nursing “Caring” During Catastrophic Events: Theoretical, Research and Clinical Insights

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Objectives
• Describe the physical/psychosocial impact of natural disasters on human life
• Describe the caring experiences of nurses during/after natural disasters
• Discuss the applicability of theoretical perspectives of caring as frameworks for disaster nursing
• Recommend strategies for caring research as related to disaster nursing practice.

Disasters: a definition
• A threatening or occurring event of such destructive magnitude as to dislocate people, separate families, destroy properties, injure or kill people. A disaster produces immediate suffering; basic human needs cannot be adequately addressed by affected people and impedes them from initiating and proceeding with their recovery efforts.
Disaster definition continued
Natural disasters include floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, typhoons, winter storms, tsunamis, hail storms, wildfires, windstorms, volcanoes, droughts, extreme hot/cold weather and earthquakes.
Stranglund, 2010

Impact of disasters

Impact of Natural Disasters
In the year 2011, natural disasters once again had a devastating impact on human society. Worldwide, 332 reported natural disasters caused the deaths of more than 30,770 people, made 244.7 million victims and caused a record amount of US$ 366.1 billion of damages. A total of 101 countries were hit by these disasters. The five countries that were most often hit, the Philippines, the United States, China, India and Indonesia, accounted for 31% of total disaster occurrence in 2011. Year after year, these countries top the list of countries experiencing the highest number of disaster events.

SOURCE: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters Institute of Health and Society (IRSS) Université catholique de Louvain, 2012
**Natural disaster occurrence**

Source: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of disasters</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Oceania</th>
<th>Global</th>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geophysical</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hydrological</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meteorological</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total 2011</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Declared Disasters in the US by Year**


http://www.fema.gov/news/disaster_totals_annual.fema
(Retrieved 2.5.13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Disaster Declarations</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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</table>

**Impact of natural disasters on affected inhabitants**

- Economic
- Physical
- Psychological
- Social
- Cultural
- Health care
- Local, regional, national, global communities
Children's responses to disasters

- Depends on age, gender, extent of destruction, loss, parental responses.
- Academic failure, posttraumatic stress disorder
- Depression, Anxiety, Bereavement
- Other behavioral problems such changes in eating & sleeping patterns delinquency and substance abuse

Sources: National Commission on Children and Disasters. 2010 Report to the President and Congress; Sterling, YM, (2011) Society of Pediatric Nurses Position Statement on disaster management for children and families, JPN, 26(1), 97-100

Nursing “Caring” experiences during and after natural disasters

- Humanitarian nursing
- Alleviate human suffering
- Emergency care, triage, stabilization
- Clinical competency; capacity of caring for all ages
- Duty to care
- Ethical issues
- End of life care
- Environmental aspects
Compassion Fatigue: a cost to caring

• A human phenomenon of emotional exhaustion and dysfunction as a result of prolonged responsibility for and intensely intimate exposure to trauma sufferers. Caregivers who have worked with traumatized people experience physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms; caregiver’s reduced capacity in being empathetic resulting from knowing about traumatic event suffered by a person (Adams et al., 2006; Pfifferling, 2008)

Compassion Fatigue

• Prevalent among healthcare providers and administrators involved in disaster relief after Katrina (Pfifferling, 2008)
• Majority of nurses during 2004 Florida hurricane were at low risk for CF (Frank & Karioth, 2006)
• Some evidence of compassion fatigue among Perinatal nurses who provided care during Katrina (Giarratano et al., 2008)

Nurses Caring for Each Other during Hurricane Katrina (2005)
Major tenets of caring theories

- Caring is central to nursing as a discipline and to the practice of nursing
- Encompasses the behaviors, beliefs and attitudes to promote the potentials of people that aim to conserve, improve the human condition in the processes of living or dying
- Recognizes social/cultural, moral communicative aspects of caring relationships
- Dignity worth of patient
- Bureaucratic caring; structure, process, outcomes

Caring and other theories and disaster nursing: Are they relevant?

- Caring theories
- Relevant caring related concepts and constructs
- Decision theory
- Economic theory
- Social welfare theory
- Crisis theory
- Utility theory
- Ethical theories and principles


Implications of caring theory to disaster nursing

- One article to date speaks to the relevance of caring theories as frameworks for disaster nursing, disaster management (Dade, 2012)
- Lombardo & Eyre (2011) believes Watson’s theory of human caring provides theoretical perspectives related to compassion fatigue
- Application to other disaster caregivers
- Caring theories should be included in disaster nursing courses, textbooks; other disaster educational offerings
Strategies for caring research and disaster nursing practice, education

• Caring as perceived/described by nurses
• Qualitative methods
• Few studies from the perspective of survivors
• Concept development; Theory testing studies
• Testing existing caring instruments; design and test new instruments
• Case study research
• Ethics of disaster related research and caring
• Multidisciplinary caring research

Conclusion:

• “Nursing is a universal art; each effort may be different – the basic tenet of nursing: caring, touching and alleviating human suffering are the same in all situations; power of caring is infinite and universal” (Pomerleau, 2010)
• “That’s what nurses do – we are dedicated to the care and well-being of others, even in the face of disaster. It is the reason we put our patients first at all times, why we support our peers and why we mentor novices and student nurses. Caring for your patients, our community and each other. That’s just what nurses do.” (Bernard & Mathews, 2008)

Thank you!
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Key References


Key References continued

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