

The challenges of determining your scope of practice in a disaster.

Dianne Crellin ¹⁻³, Bronte Martin ^{4,5} and Rebecca Weir ^{5,6}

1 Emergency Department, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Flemington Road, PARKVILLE, 3052

2 Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Flemington Road, PARKVILLE, 3052

3 The University of Melbourne, 200 Berkeley Street, CARLTON 3010.

4. Trauma Service, The Royal Darwin Hospital

5. National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre

6 Emergency department, Wangaratta Base Hospital

Providing care in a disaster creates some unique challenges to determining professional scope of practice. The pressures created by the overwhelming demand on limited resources can be the source of considerable pressure to extend scope beyond accepted professional and regulatory boundaries. This coupled with the complexities of determining scope overseas where professional and governmental regulation may differ from those in Australia make the determination of what is professionally and legally appropriate scope for nurses in an overseas disaster deployment particularly difficult for the team member. As the number major disasters is predicted to increase and Australia is increasingly likely to be called upon to provide a response a clear understanding of these issues is essential for those involved in disaster care.

In this paper we will use the experiences of the nursing team working in the AusMAT field hospital in Tacloban following Typhoon Haiyan to illustrate the challenges of determining and adhering to a professionally appropriate scope of practice for registered nurses and nurse practitioners. The current regulatory framework governing practice and scope for nurses deploying overseas to a disaster will also be explored to provide guidance to nurses who may be deployed in the future.

Funding / Acknowledgments

Nil

Key Words

Disaster nursing

Scope of practice

Regulation

Clinical governance