

Rising to the challenge...developing the next generation of Disaster nurses.

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This presentation will explore the unique experiences of the nursing team working in the AusMAT field hospital in Tacloban following Typhoon Haiyan to illustrate the challenges of delivering acute care nursing in austere disaster environment, and highlight areas for consideration in the development of a skilled and prepared nursing workforce for future disaster responses.

Typhoon Haiyan made landfall the 8th November, 2013 in the Philippines, Eastern Samar Province. Known locally as Yolanda, the category five 'superstorm' was thought to be the strongest Typhoon ever to make landfall. Subsequently, over 16 million people were affected; with an estimated 28,626 injuries and 6190 deaths reported.

The 50 bed Australian surgical field hospital deployed in response comprised a 26 bed Emergency / Primary care outpatient facility and 34 bed Inpatient surgical facility with 2 operating tables. The Field Hospital was operational for a period of 21 days, during which a total of 2738 presentations, 238 theatre cases and 541 occupied bed days of nursing care were provided.

Delivery of care in an austere disaster environment creates many unique nursing challenges; operating in a resource limited multidisciplinary team, identifying relevant scopes of practice, specialised skill sets and currency requirements, competency and skill mix considerations, human resource management and patient flow. In the context of overwhelming demand, limited resources and a low-tech environment, there is a requirement for a flexible, adaptable, multi-skilled nursing workforce to in order to adequately meet the needs of the population at risk. In the ever increasing age of technology in healthcare, a return to the foundation principles of nursing care and application of "clinical medicine" in the absence of many modern diagnostic tools is fast becoming the primary domain of the widely acknowledged aging generation of nurses.

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Key Words

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Nursing Competency
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