



Review

What are the most common domains of the core competencies of disaster nursing? A scoping review



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ABSTRACT

Aim: Scoping review was conducted to identify the most common domains of the core competencies of disaster nursing.

Background: Nurses play an essential role in all phases of disaster management. For nurses to respond competently, they must be equipped with the skills to provide comprehensive and holistic care to the populations affected by or at risk of disasters.

Methods: A scoping review was conducted using the Joanna Briggs Institute methodology. The review used information from six databases: the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature, Ovid MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, Scopus and the Education Resources Information Center. Keywords and inclusion and exclusion criteria were identified as strategies to use in this review.

Results: Twelve studies were eligible for result extraction, as they listed domains of the core competencies. These domains varied among studies. However, the most common domains were related to communication, planning, decontamination and safety, the Incident Command System and ethics.

Conclusion: Knowledge of the domains of the core competencies, such as understanding the content and location of the disaster plan, communication during disaster and ethical issues is fundamental for nurses. Including these domains in the planning and provision of training for nurses, such as disaster drills, will strengthen their preparedness to respond competently to disaster cases. Nurses must be involved in future research in this area to explore and describe their fundamental competencies in each domain.

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1. Background

A disaster can be defined as significant damage to property and people's lives caused by an event that overwhelms the local community's human resources [32]. Both natural and manmade disasters have significant effects on the health and the physical, emotional and psychological states of community members [27]. To control the possible negative effects of a disaster, a disaster management strategy must be implemented. The four main stages of providing proper disaster management are mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery [7]. Typically, mitigation and preparedness are implemented before a disaster occurs; the response stage is initiated during the disaster; and the recovery stage is carried out after the disaster [27]. The disaster management phases are summarised in Table 1.

The increasing frequency of disasters globally has created an urgent need for international organisations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), to develop effective plans for disaster preparedness and management [36]. However, it is nurses that account for the largest professional group in the health sector, and they play a critical role in all phases of disaster management [32]. Nurses provide holistic care for victims and their families. Daily et al. [8] argued that, at the scene of a disaster, nurses can work as coordinators, information distributors, emotional and psychological supporters and clinical and first aid providers; further, they can triage victims and prioritise patients' needs for care. Confidently responding to disasters and effectively providing help to the affected people requires adequately prepared nurses.

The International Council of Nurses' (ICN) disaster nursing framework identified three phases of disasters for nurse competency (2009). First, the pre-event phase focuses on ensuring that nurses possess adequate knowledge, skills and abilities in the identification of risks, execution of response plans and preparation for all types of disasters before they occur. Second, in the disaster phase, nurses must provide physical, psychological and holistic care competently for individuals, families and communities along with special populations, such as children and the elderly. Finally, during the post-disaster phase, recovery and reconstruction take place. According to the ICN and WHO [16] nurses must have the sufficient knowledge and skills to care for the affected communities, individuals and families, not only in the immediate period but also in the long term.

Nurses have few opportunities to develop their expertise, yet they require regular education and practice, especially regarding how to care for patients exposed to chemical and biological radiation or nuclear hazards [33]. They are often not well prepared for caring for patients with symptoms related to biological weapons [1,19,34]. To ensure that nurses are well prepared and have the adequate knowledge and skills required for all phases of disaster management, international efforts have been made to develop

the core competencies of disaster nursing [8,34]; however, these core competencies are inconsistent in their terminology and structures. For example, nurses in Japan are not familiar with the term *competencies* [17]. There is also a lack of evidence supporting the most appropriate set of the core competencies of disaster nursing [8]. Determining the most common domains of the core competencies of nurses identified in previous studies would help develop specific education programmes for disaster nursing preparedness, provide training and conduct research. This notion was supported by Ling and Daily [20], who claimed that the development of education and training programmes for competencies in general or for specific areas is required to strengthen the level of preparedness of nurses worldwide.

2. Methods

A scoping review is a review of the literature that aims to identify the amount and quality of research on a certain topic. In other words, a scoping review focuses on identifying what is known about a topic and its associated characteristics in the existing literature [6]. The methodology of this scoping review was adopted from that described in *The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Reviewers' Manual 2015, Methodology for JBI Scoping Reviews* [25] and includes the following: identifying the research objective(s) and question (s); outlining the inclusion and exclusion criteria; identifying search strategies; extracting the results; discussing the results and drawing conclusions, including the implications for future research and practice.

3. Objective and research question

The objective of this scoping review was to identify the most common domains of the core competencies of nurses in disaster management. The research question was as follows: What are the most common domains of the core competencies of nurses in disaster management?

4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The studies that were reviewed were selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria related to the type of participant, phenomenon of interest, outcomes and type of study. The scoping review examined studies of the core competencies in disaster management for nurses in a range of different hospital settings, such as emergency departments, critical care units, medical wards and surgical wards. Moreover, studies that involved nurses outside of hospital settings, such as community nurses, were also considered. This review considered studies that listed the domains of the core competencies of disaster nursing in both natural and man-made disasters. It also examined studies that included the following important domains of the core competencies of nurses during all phases of disaster management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Lastly, this scoping review included all types of studies (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and expert opinions).

The other inclusion and exclusion criteria for this review focused on the following: time period, language, type of article, study focus, setting, place of study and population and sample. Table 2 summarises all the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria along with the research objective and question guided the data extraction and presentation. While the framework used can be flexible, it was iterative in this study. Data that were relevant to the research question and objective were extracted.

Table 1
Phases of disaster management.

Phase	Concept
Preparedness	Preparation not only includes assigned programmes or plans but also ensures continuous education that focuses on long-term goals, training, assessment and evaluation for all activities involved in managing disasters [7,32].
Mitigation	Mitigation requires a comprehensive plan for identifying risks and strengthening the resilience of response mechanisms [5].
Response	Response to a disaster focuses on saving lives, reducing damage to infrastructure and supporting families through the provision of care, including food and shelter [27,32].
Recovery	Recovering from a disaster refers to restoring anything that was destroyed and returning to normal levels of functioning [27].

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