

Short Commentary

Nurses' Preparation to Manage Psychological Crises:
The Importance of Psychological First Aid TrainingZahra Saboohi¹ , Mahnaz Solhi^{2*}

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ABSTRACT

Background: Crises and disasters, both natural and human-made, profoundly impact individuals and communities, leading to issues like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Nurses, as first responders, play a crucial role in providing psychological first aid (PFA) to the affected persons.

Main Idea: This commentary underscores the importance of PFA training to empower nurses in the effective management of psychological crisis. It also discusses strategies to enhance PFA training, including specialized education, team-based approaches, and access to supportive resources.

Conclusion: PFA training enables nurses to offer effective support during crises and promoting community resilience. It is recommended that PFA be integrated into nursing education and professional development to strengthen nurses' crisis response capabilities.

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Highlights

- Nurses play a crucial role in providing PFA during disasters and crises.
- PFA training enables nurses to identify and manage psychological symptoms such as PTSD, anxiety, and stress.
- Continuous education and practical exercises, such as scenario simulations, are essential for improving nurses' crisis intervention skills.
- Team-based approaches and collaboration among healthcare professionals can enhance the effectiveness of PFA interventions.
- Increased access to resources and professional psychological support systems helps prevent nurse burnout in crises.

Plain Language Summary

This commentary highlights the vital role nurses play in helping individuals cope with psychological crises during disasters. Psychological first aid (PFA) is a brief, immediate intervention that helps mitigate the emotional impact of crises. Training nurses in PFA improves their ability to recognize and treat psychological distress, anxiety, and trauma. Continuous education and team collaboration are essential to ensure the well-preparedness of nurses in these situations. With the right training and resources, nurses can provide more effective psychological support, helping individuals recover emotionally during and after crises.

Introduction

Crisises and disasters, both natural and man-made, have a profound impact on the physical and psychological well-being of individuals and communities. From natural disasters, from earthquakes, floods, and epidemics, to man-made disasters such as wars and mass violence, they all cause severe psychological experiences for the affected people. Crises are usually associated with psychological consequences such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and even suicidal behaviors. Meanwhile, the role of nurses as the primary healthcare providers in providing psychological support to affected individuals is crucial (Kiliç Bayageldi & Kaloğlu Binici, 2024). One of the practical tools in this field is psychological first aid (PFA), which is recognized as an initial and short-term intervention designed to mitigate the psychological effects of crises (Said et al., 2022).

The role of nurses in crises

As one of the most crucial social resources for maintaining community well-being, nurses play a fundamental role in disaster management, ensuring that medical services and comprehensive care are effectively provided

during and after a disaster (Ranse et al., 2022). They are expected to identify risks before disasters occur, take protective measures, and have a practical plan to provide effective and comprehensive physical and psychological care to patients and their families during and after a disaster. It is essential for psychiatric nurses who care for high-risk groups, such as the mentally ill, to be prepared for disasters and increase their capabilities in identifying post-disaster psychological reactions to manage the care and treatment process effectively (Eweida et al., 2023).

PFA

PFA is a humanitarian support intervention provided to people of all age groups who are suffering and need support. These aids help people find peace and gain insight into their experiences by allowing them to express their feelings and emotions in a safe environment where their privacy is respected and preserved. The related interventions include active listening, reassuring, creating a sense of security, and guiding people to access support resources (Shah et al., 2020).

The role of nurses in providing PFA

In the aftermath of natural disasters, accidents, or traumatic events, PFA is essential as a tool to provide immediate support and reduce symptoms of anxiety and

stress among affected individuals. Disaster preparedness and the ability to provide PFA are critical for psychiatric nurses in dealing with patients with poor judgment and a lack of recognition of mental illness (Bayageldi & Binici, 2024). These abilities help nurses to quickly identify the initial signs of psychological injuries and provide immediate help in critical situations. Studies show that the ability to detect early the signs of psychological damage and provide PFA is significantly effective in improving the mental condition of patients. This capability not only reduces the severity of mental crises but also prevents the deterioration of patients' conditions and facilitates the treatment process (Shah et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024).

The necessity of PFA training for nurses

Psychological first-aid training is considered one of the most effective methods for preparing nursing students for crisis management (Zhang et al., 2022). PFA training enables nurses to acquire the necessary skills to recognize and intervene in crises, ultimately providing more effective psychological support. Nurses fully trained in this field can quickly and effectively communicate with patients in crises and solve their psychological needs (Madani et al., 2023).

Solutions and the Future

Several key actions are necessary to improve the effectiveness of PFA and to make nurses more prepared to face psychological crises caused by disasters:

Specialized and continuous training

Nursing education programs and specialized courses should include training for nurses in the field of PFA. This training should consist of identifying symptoms of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other crisis-related psychological reactions. It should also focus on practical methods for implementing PFA in critical situations, enabling nurses to react quickly. Using simulated scenarios and practical exercises as part of this training can help nurses strengthen their skills and prepare to deal with real situations (Madani et al., 2024).

Developing team frameworks for delivering PFA

Providing PFA as a team can increase the effectiveness of these interventions. In critical situations where multiple health service providers may be working with patients simultaneously, task division and coordination among team members are crucial. A multidisciplinary

team, comprising nurses, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals, must collaborate to deliver comprehensive and coordinated care (Wang et al., 2024).

Increasing access to resources and support

One of the main challenges in providing PFA in crises is the need for more resources for nurses. It is essential to establish a support infrastructure and provide nurses with access to vital resources, including educational materials, practical guides, and psychological support (Farokhzadian et al., 2024). Additionally, creating support systems for nurses from both psychological and professional perspectives will help them better cope with work pressures caused by crises and avoid burnout. Support systems can include professional counseling, group meetings to share experiences, and access to online resources for stress management and coping.

Creating standard guidelines and intervention protocols

To ensure coordination and efficiency in providing PFA, standardized guidelines and protocols should be developed to guide nurses and other healthcare providers in crises. These guidelines should include specific steps to identify patients' psychological needs, provide immediate interventions, and refer them to relevant specialists if needed (Kim & Han, 2021).

Encouraging research and innovation in the field of PFA

Considering the complexity and variety of crises, it is necessary to conduct more research on the effectiveness of PFA and the optimization of these methods. Scientific research can help identify new best practices, challenges, and opportunities to improve mental health care in crises. Additionally, utilizing the latest technologies, including mobile applications, online platforms, and digital tools, can help educate and support nurses in the field of PFA. These technologies can be utilized as auxiliary tools to enhance nurses' access to educational resources and facilitate the delivery of psychological care during crises (Chaharsoughi et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Nurses have a significant and prominent role in providing psychological support in crises. PFA is recognized as an essential intervention in response to psychological problems caused by crises. Proper and continuous training of nurses in the field of PFA can enhance the

quality of mental care and improve the psychological well-being of individuals affected by it. Therefore, expanding training and resources related to PFA for nurses is crucial and can positively impact the quality of nursing care during crises.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

There were no ethical considerations to be considered in this research.

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Authors' contributions

The authors equally contributed to the conceptualization of the study, writing, and reviewing the manuscript. They have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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