

# European Nursing Congress

March 04-05, 2019 | London, UK

## Team management in operating hospitals following the earthquake-triggered nuclear accident in Fukushima: How did nurse managers handle their strained teams?

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**Purpose:** Fukushima prefecture experienced radioactive contamination due to the nuclear power plant accident after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. We studied hospitals that were near, yet outside the evacuation zone in which they remained operational. The present study aims to clarify how nurse managers managed the staff, who experienced considerable fear.

**Methodology:** We conducted semi-structured interviews with eight nurse managers at four hospitals. The transcripts were analyzed qualitatively.

**Findings:** We revealed common intentions from nurse managers during each phase. 1) Managing the situation in which the staff evacuated one after another. Nurse managers realized that they were left behind in a potentially dangerous area. It was shocking to them that some nurses left their jobs, but they responded carefully in order to avoid further evacuation while also ensuring the staff's rights to evacuate. 2) Paying careful attention to alleviate the suffering of those who stayed. They were aware of the anxiety and anger of those who stayed. To relieve the staff, they spent time with the staff, expressed their gratitude, and provided paid leave so that they could cope with their own suffering. The team experienced a sense of unity by helping each other to overcome difficulties. 3) Handling and rebuilding their strained teams. After confirming safety, the staff

who had evacuated began to return. Nurse managers sensed the following: lack of forgiveness among those who stayed, guilt among evacuees, and change in staff relationships. To rebuild the strained team, they remained neutral while engaging closely with each member, created a permissive atmosphere by penalizing the evacuees, and arranged opportunities for the staff to confide their experiences. Although work appeared to proceed smoothly, they were unsure about the staff's intentions.

**Conclusion:** Team management under unprecedented danger is quite difficult, and lessons can be gathered from this specific experience.

### Speaker Biography

Yukie Takemura, RN, PHN, Certified Nurse Administrator, Ph.D. is an associate professor of the Department of Nursing Administration, Graduate School of Medicine, the University of Tokyo. She worked at hospitals as a director of the nursing department prior to her current position. She desires to develop systems and methodologies to bring out the potential of nursing and healthcare organizations to contribute to the well-being of not only patients but also workers. With this aim, she has been working to clarify complex organizational phenomena and identify key factors for effective organizational management and development. The current study is part of a project that aims to develop a multiple case study method in the field of nursing administration. Using this method, she sought to describe organizational phenomena at hospitals in Fukushima after the earthquake-triggered nuclear accident with her colleague. Her research concerns also include support programs for nurse managers.

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