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I. INTRODUCTION

1. *A consultation on the Role of the Nurse in Mass Casualty Management was held at the Cortsland Hotel, Antigua, May 25-27, 1994. The purpose of this meeting was to have Senior Nursing Personnel from countries comprising the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States examine the Role of the Nurse in Mass Casualty Management and enunciate strategies and recommendations for the strengthening of this role.*

The consultation came under the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Project for the Eastern Caribbean Countries, a joint project between the French Ministry for Cooperation, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization.

2. *Participants in the consultation included thirty-six (36) nursing personnel from Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (see Annex A). Nursing personnel included Chief and Principal Nursing Officers, Tutors, Matrons, Casualty Department nurses, Representatives of General Nursing Councils and executive members of Local and Regional Nurses' Associations. An apology was received from the representative of the Department of Advanced Nursing Education, University of the West Indies, Jamaica.*
3. *Resource persons were drawn from physicians and nurses trained in Mass Casualty Management from Antigua, Saint Martin, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Pan American Health Organization. (See Annex B)*

II. OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony which was formal was chaired by Miss Olive Gardner, Principal Nursing Officer and was attended by the Minister of Health, the Honourable Mr. Hilroy Humphreys. In her opening remarks Ms. Gardner extended a cordial welcome to the participants, she noted that the level of representation included a number of nurses who hold senior leadership responsibilities in their Ministries of Health. These nurses are at that level in the hierarchy where they can influence change.

Miss Gardner also pointed out that in the area of Disaster Preparedness nurses in the Caribbean have shown keen interest and involvement. In this regard, arising from first hand experience with disasters such as Hurricane David in 1979, they initiated a workshop in 1980 on Regional Guidelines for nurses in Disaster Preparedness. They also established a regional pool of nurses for response in the event of a disaster. Nurses in the Caribbean have also recognized the importance of education for nurses in Disaster Management. Towards this end all the schools of nursing have included a unit on Disaster Management in their curricula.

In conclusion Miss Gardner welcomed the opportunity for nurses to re-examine their roles and functions in Mass Casualty situations, especially in relation to the increasing number of natural and man-made disasters.

Dr. Jean Luc Poncelet brought greetings from the Director of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo and conveyed regrets from Dr. Karen A. Sealey, the Caribbean Program Coordinator who was unable to attend the meeting. In his brief remarks he touched upon the number of disasters which have occurred in the Caribbean from 1979 to 1989 and the development of a Disaster Preparedness Project in 1992 for the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States with funding from the French Ministry of Cooperation and the Pan American Health Organization. This project has as a main focus, training of health personnel in Mass Casualty Management.

The Honourable Minister of Health in his feature address welcomed the opportunity to address Caribbean Nurses for the first time since assuming the portfolio of the Ministry of Health. He thanked the Pan American Health Organization for their contributions to health care in the region and looked forward to a continued good working relationship with the Organization.

In his address, he pointed out the importance of education at all levels to ensure adequate response to disasters and as a result reduction in a loss of life, injuries and loss of property. He re-affirmed the commitment of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction and pledged his support in continuing to strengthen the capability of the National Office of Disaster Services.

The Minister also noted the critical role nurses play in the health team and stated that it was necessary then for them to be well equipped with knowledge and skills to fulfill their roles effectively and efficiently. He called for strengthening of the team approach in Disaster Management and the need for better facilities to ensure a high level of functioning.

III. METHODOLOGY AND CONTENT OUTLINE OF CONSULTATION

The Methodology of the Consultation consisted of oral and video presentations followed by group work in which conclusions, strategies and recommendations were reached and presented during plenary sessions. (see Annex C)

A desk-top simulation exercise provided participants with the opportunity to respond in a disaster situation as members of the Disaster Preparedness Team, in managing mass casualties in pre- and in-hospital care. The outcome of the simulation exercise pointed to the fact that nursing staff in Disaster Management needed to develop special skills in order to function effectively as team members in pre- or in-hospital management of mass casualties.

Topics presented by resource persons and summaries of the presentations are as follows:-

1. "New Approaches to Mass Casualty Management" - Dr. J.L. Bordonado

Sequenced activities in Mass Casualty Management are Field Management (search and rescue, triage, first aid, stabilization), transfer management to health facilities and hospital care. Triage is the basis for Mass Casualty Management. In managing mass casualties, pre-planning is vital, and procedures should be tested. At times of disaster the plan is activated by mobilizing multi-sectoral resources and providing prompt and efficient response to health care needs.

The Mass Casualty Management is a multi-sectoral coordination system based on procedures which are used daily, managed by skilled personnel, which maximize existing resources and are adapted on-site to in-hospital care.

The pre-hospital system in Mass Casualty Management is directed to the Role of the Nurse in the Community (District) with skills in initial assessment and reporting, since he/she is usually the first nurse on-site in response to a disaster.

2. **"Principles of Hospital Mass Casualty Management" -**
Dr. Roslyn Bascombe-Adams

An outline of principles of hospital Mass Casualty Management include the necessity for nursing staff to be trained to respond quickly and appropriately, the use of triage procedures on a continuous basis (which should be a universal approach in the day-to-day management of a Casualty Department) and the maintenance of the stability of trained staff in the Accident and Emergency Department.

The success of the team approach for in-hospital management of mass casualties lies in detailed planning, involving all team members. Individual roles must be clearly understood by each member and preparations made for action before the event occurs.

3. **"Principles of Pre-Hospital Mass Casualty Management -**
Dr. J.L. Bordonado

These are directed to adequate and quick response to disaster with maximum use of manpower and available equipment, establishment of communication, on-site triage, field stabilization transfer procedures to adapted hospitals and well prepared Hospital Disaster Plans.

The training in pre-hospital management must include all physicians and nurses who comprise the team. Advanced medical post activities in pre-hospital Mass Casualty Management are directed to evaluation of victims, assignment of priorities, stabilization of victims, assignment of destinations and transportation.

4. **Presentation on Training Programs and Nursing Regulations in the**
Organization of Eastern Caribbean States - Moderator: Ms. Maria
Barker

All countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States have included Disaster Preparedness in Schools of Nursing curricula. Courses vary in length from seven (7) to seventy (70) hours, with some courses having both theory and practical components. The module/unit which carries a variety of topics is usually taught in the second or third year of the nursing

program. Mass Casualty Management is generally not included in the curriculum. The use of simulation exercises as part of teaching and learning experiences is practiced only in a few countries. Only two Nurse Tutors have received training as "Trainers" in Disaster Preparedness.

Policies and procedures for Mass Casualty Management are outdated or absent in some countries. Regulations governing the nurse in Mass Casualty Management have not been developed to address his/her expanded role.

IV. SUMMARY OF GROUP REPORTS

1. Development of the Role of Nursing Staff in Mass Casualty Management

The Role of Nursing Staff in Mass Casualty Management and Accident and Emergency is currently poorly defined and is not recognized as a specialist level of post-basic training. Training programs for "Trainers" and nursing personnel should promptly be upgraded or developed and initiated at basic and post-basic levels.

The role of a nurse in Mass Casualty Management and Accident and Emergency should therefore be:-

- *Planner/Organizer*
- *Care Provider*
- *Administrator/Manager*
- *Triage Officer*
- *Crisis Intervenor*
- *Special Attention-Giver (Children, Aged)*
- *Communicator*
- *First Aider (including Psychological care) Counsellor*
- *Recorder and Reporter*

In order to support this role, official recognition should be given to Mass Casualty Management and Accident and Emergency as a specialist area. A certified post-basic program should be developed, initially for Accident and Emergency Nurses and Tutors as "Trainers" in Mass Casualty Management, so that they can be utilized in Schools of Nursing and in-service education programs.

A core of nurses with Mass Casualty Management and Accident and Emergency Skills should be assigned on a continuous basis to the Casualty Department, to provide adequate coverage. Community nursing personnel should be included in the in-service education training in Mass Casualty Management and rotated through the Accident and Emergency Department. The concepts of Mass Casualty Management should be used in the daily management of casualty in the Accident and Emergency Department. Consideration for remuneration of persons certified to work in this specialized area should be made at country level. Simulation exercises, emphasizing the multi-sectoral approach, as well as attachments to institutions with appropriately functioning Mass Casualty Management and Accident and Emergency Department programs, should be used as teaching/learning strategies.

2. Training Programs

The component of Disaster Preparedness in nursing curricula should be revised to include areas specific to Mass Casualty Management such as pre-hospital care, multi-sectoral approach, triaging, debriefing and stress management. Simulation exercises should be multi-sectoral. Protocols for Schools of Nursing in Disaster Management should be developed and Mass Casualty Management incorporated in in-service education programs. At least one tutor from each School of Nursing in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States countries should receive training in Disaster Preparedness to include Mass Casualty Management.

3. Nursing Regulations

A nurse working in the Accident and Emergency Department should be seen as functioning in an expanded role. To maximize the use of these skills in the team approach, specific regulations to allow the nurse to function as part of the Team need to be developed. The nursing skills needed for this role are triaging, intravenous therapy, ventilation, advanced cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and intubation.

A list of nurses trained in Mass Casualty Management and Accident and Emergency should be maintained by the General Nursing Council.

4. Specific Role of Nursing Staff in Emergency Care

To provide quality care in emergency care, a core of trained staff should be maintained in the Accident and Emergency Department with the ability to perform emergency procedures such as: setting up intravenous lines; maintaining airways and intubations; advanced trauma life support; advanced cardiac life support and effective communication skills. Approved policies and protocols should guide the practice of the nurse. In planning for Mass Casualty Management, nurses should be fully involved and should be provided with skills needed for pre-hospital management. The nurse's role in pre-hospital management may include: triage, stabilization of the patient before transportation to a health facility as well as safe transfer and management of the patient from site to hospital, according to priority.

To function in this role, the nurse should possess the following skills:-

- *Organizing*
- *Co-ordinating and follow-up*
- *Leadership*
- *Recording*
- *Decision-making*
- *Team spirit-building*
- *Communicating*
- *Self motivation*
- *Providing emergency care*

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations formulated to improve the Role of the Nurse in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States countries in Mass Casualty Management are as follows:-

- 1. Ministries of Health should approach the University of the West Indies, Barbados, and the Disaster Preparedness Project, PAHO/WHO, to develop, support and institutionalize a post-basic certified course for nurses working in Accident and Emergency Departments and tutors in Mass Casualty Management, similar to the course that physicians from the Eastern Caribbean countries attend in Barbados.*
- 2. Ministries of Health should ensure that Accident and Emergency Departments which should play a key role in Mass Casualty Management are classified as specialized areas and staffed with a core of nursing personnel who are trained in Mass Casualty Management, to allow coverage of at least one nurse with these skills on each shift, to include the night shift.*
- 3. The General Nursing Council in each country should update its regulations, by 1995, to include the nurse's expanded role in hospital and pre-hospital Mass Casualty Management and maintain a list of persons with skills encompassing medicine and nursing, such as intravenous therapy, advanced life support systems and intubation.*
- 4. Principal Nursing Tutors in Schools of Nursing should review and update the module/unit on Disaster Preparedness to include Mass Casualty Management, as an Eastern Caribbean activity, with support from PAHO/WHO, by October 1994.*
- 5. Ministries of Health must ensure that nursing personnel participate in the development of protocols for Mass Casualty Management in pre-hospital and hospital management settings, by 1995.*

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*** Mrs. Syringa Marshall-Burnett of Jamaica sent her apologies.**

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**Consultation on the Role of the Nursing Staff
in Mass Casualty Management**

**Cortsland Hotel, Antigua
May 25-27, 1994**

PROGRAM

May 25

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 08h30 | - | Opening Ceremony |
| 09h15 | - | C O F F E E B R E A K |
| 09h30 | - | New Approach to Mass Casualty Management
(Dr. Jean Louis Bordonado, Director, Eastern
Caribbean Disaster Project) |
| 12h30 | - | L U N C H |
| 14h00 | - | Principles of Hospital Mass Casualty Management
(Dr. Roslyn Bascombe-Adams, St. Vincent & the
Grenadines) |
| 15h30 | - | C O F F E E B R E A K |
| 15h45 | - | Group: The Role of Nursing Staff in Hospital Mass
Casualty Management |
| 16h45 | - | Plenary Session
Moderator, Sr. Bibiana Baptiste, St. Lucia |
| 17h30 | - | End of Day 1 |

May 26

- 09h00 - Principles of Pre-hospital Mass Casualty Management
(Dr. Jean Louis Bordonado, Director, Eastern Caribbean Disaster Project)
- 10h15 - C O F F E E B R E A K
- 10h30 - Group: The Role of Nursing Staff in Pre-hospital Mass Casualty Management
- 11h30 - Plenary Session
Moderator: Mr. Jean Luc Hamlet, Director of Emergency Medical Services, St. Martin
- 12h30 - L U N C H
- 14h00 - Desktop Simulation Exercise
- 15h30 - C O F F E E B R E A K
- 15h45 - Resumption of Simulation Exercise
- 17h00 - End of Day 2

May 27

- 09h00 - Brief on Training Programs and Nursing Regulations in the countries of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States Countries (Ms. Maria Barker, Nursing Advisor, PAHO/Barbados)
- 10h00 - C O F F E E B R E A K
- 10h15 - Working committees:
 - What can be done to develop the Role of the Nursing Staff in Mass Casualty Management?
 - Training Programs
 - Nursing Regulations
 - Specific Role of Nursing Staff in Emergency Care

12H30 - L U N C H
14h00 - Preparation of Recommendations and Conclusions
15h00 - Closing Ceremony

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