

The Nursing Section of the World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine

Elaine Daily, RN, BS, FCCM, FAHA

President, WADEM Nursing Section

Correspondence:

E-mail: elainedaily@gmail.com

Keywords: avian influenza; Nursing Section; pandemic; publications; regional hospitals; standards; surge capacity

Web publication: 20 June 2008

In 2005, the Board of Directors of the World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WADEM) approved the organization's first professional interest membership group, the Nursing Section. This section was formed in response to expressed needs of the WADEM's nurse members who felt a need for professional recognition within and beyond the organization. Although nurses currently represent only 10% of the WADEM's total membership, the nurses feel aligned with the WADEM's mission and purpose. As members, they desired to increase nurse participation in the organization and actively encourage the professional growth of fellow nurse members.

To facilitate this end, the WADEM Nursing Section was created, and mission, goals and bylaws were developed. The key goals of the Nursing Section are to:

1. Raise the profile of nursing in the WADEM;
2. Foster the professional growth of nurses;
3. Develop disaster nursing cooperation and collaboration globally; and
4. Network/integrate nursing into the WADEM's activities/programs.

The 15th World Congress of Disaster and Emergency Medicine in Amsterdam in May 2007 heralded the Section's first business meeting and election of officers. Also, during this Congress, a full day educational program was assembled with nurses from seven countries presenting information relative to disaster nurse preparedness, hospital preparedness, and disaster nursing education.

Similar to critical care, disaster health care requires the expertise of a multi-disciplinary team. Intensivists were quick to learn that the critical care team was no more effective than its weakest member. And, in the early days of critical care, when the discipline was new and little scientific data were available to support the practice, we looked to each other—across disciplines—for knowledge, experience, guidance, and support.

Likewise, forward-thinking disaster healthcare workers have recognized the need to work as a team and to look to each other and to each other's disciplines for knowledge and information related to disaster health care.

Is the WADEM a nursing organization? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, as a multi-discipline, professional organization involved in disaster health care, it is, indeed, a nursing organization—and proud to be so. And, no, it is not, exclusively, a nursing organization. However, its interest in and support of disaster nursing issues are evident in its creation of the WADEM Nursing Section, its inclusion of nurses on its Board of Directors, its publication of *Nursing Insight*—a review of disaster literature pertinent to nursing, its biannual publication of *Nursing Issues in Disaster Health*, a supplement to *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, and its forthcoming publication of a disaster nursing textbook, *International Disaster Nursing*.

As nurse members of an international, multi-professional organization, we are committed to establishing the role of nursing in this field and to working with our fellow professionals throughout the world to ensure that competencies, standards, and scientific rigor are applied to our contributions to disaster health care.