Introduction: 

Purpose: Often military nurses are among the first responders to disaster events. This study’s aim was to gain an understanding of military nurses’ experiences in responding to disasters. “Disaster” is defined as any non-combat mission—humanitarian relief, or response to a natural or human-made event—outside of warfare. Research Question: “What is the experience of military nurses during and/or following a disaster response?”

Method(s): Utilizing a phenomenological approach, 23 United States (US) military nurses from all branches including the US Public Health Service participated in the study. Employing a purposive, snowballing technique, single face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Disaster Experiences. Nurses said: stresses in disaster are not equal to war; current preparation for combat is insufficient to prepare nurses for disaster; no one understands what a disaster involves unless they have been there and given aid. Nurses gained awareness of disaster complexity and the totality of disruption in victim’s lives, but had problems with coping. Ultimately they had feelings of being fortunate.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Findings indicated a need for changes in military disaster education; practice; policy; recommendations for higher education, and training that includes civilian collaboration. Psychological support is required. If military nurses do not have skills to care for themselves, they cannot effectively provide aid to the victims of the disaster. Disclaimer: Grant Award Number N08-P12: The Uniformed Service University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), Bethesda, MD is the awarding and administering office. The research was sponsored by the TriService Nursing Research Program; the information or content and conclusions reported do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of, nor should any official endorsement be inferred by, the TriService Nursing Research Program, the USUHS, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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