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Acknowledging and re-acknowledging the boundary between groups of nurses in the workplace after the nuclear accident in Fukushima

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Statement of the problem: In Fukushima prefecture, there was considerable fear among people about unseen dangers as a result of the nuclear accident due to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. With no evacuation orders, the hospitals decided to continue their operation. It was reported that a temporal conflict occurred between the nurses who continued working and those who did not. However, under what circumstances and when such conflicts were recognized by nurses have not been studied before. The purpose of this study was to describe nurses' experience of recognizing the division caused by attendance behavior at hospitals outside the evacuation zone.

Methodology: We conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty nurses and six nurse managers at three hospitals where their operation continued in areas outside the evacuation zone during the disaster. The transcripts of the interview data were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on the narratives wherein the participants indicated separation.

Findings: Not only the description referring to groups but also other occasions, such as the promotion of self and others, exercising disaster drills, and so on, delineated the division at the workplace. Such situations sometimes occur repeatedly, linger for a long time, emerging shortly after the disaster, or occur later. They do not always serve as a reminiscence of the conflict but are only recognized as a boundary between the groups.

Conclusion & Significance: Regardless of the presence or absence of conflicts, acknowledging and re-acknowledging the boundary between groups of nurses can occur repeatedly and/or remain over a long period of time. Although the situations might be unavoidable and might seem irrelevant to workplace division, nurses in management position still need to be aware of such situations.

Biography

Yukie Takemura, RN, Certified Nurse Administrator, PhD is an associate professor of the Department of Nursing Administration, Graduate School of Medicine, the University of Tokyo, and an Executive Director of Japan Association of Nursing Academies. She desires to develop systems and methodology to bring out the potential of nursing and healthcare organizations to contribute to the well-being of not only patients but also workers, institutes, and the society. With this aim, she has been working on elucidating complex organizational phenomena and finding the key means to effective organizational 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, her colleague and she sought to describe organizational phenomena and nurses' experiences at hospitals in Fukushima after the earthquake-triggered nuclear accident in 2011. Development and support programs for nurse managers are also her research concerns.

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