# Crisis Management Plan for Health Care Organizations

In regular occurrences disasters happen at any moment, causing serious problems and threats to the health and livelihoods of humans. Disasters can be caused by human factors or natural factors (Davies, 2015). Hospitals are some of the organizations that are affected primarily by the occurrence of earthquakes. Apart from dealing with the earthquake health care organizations have to deal with a lot of problems that are caused by the earthquakes. Health care organizations need to devise ways to be prepared to handle such disasters in their management systems. Since earthquakes are unexpected occurrences, they disrupt the routine operations and services of the hospitals. During such adversities, the process that will cater for recovery management and emergency response activities should be in place. Management guidelines and procedures during the earthquake should be defined. The priority of health care organizations is to protect the lives of people around them, the community and environment as well as the facilities. This paper represents a crisis management plan for a health organization during an earthquake.

## Aim of the Crisis Management Plan

A crisis management plan seeks to provide the health organization with the structure of management, the responsibility and assignments and finally the measures needed during and after the disaster (Kerzner, 2013). Health organizations need to follow this plan to solve and attend to immediate demands for an earthquake with the aim of preserving and protecting lives, manage communication and disseminate proper information about the emergency response operations. They should also provide accurate information to help with action plans and decision-making process and provide essential operations and services for people around them.

## Project Objectives

### Information organization and communication

The management plan seeks to provide a central point where communication and transmission of information will take place. The plan will identify the alternative point of contact for the health care staff when the normal channels of communication fail (Coombs, 2014). Apart from disseminating information, the program will help with the smooth process of collecting information about the earthquake thus; will help in giving actual information to the relevant stakeholders. The staff members will be trained in the skills needed in an emergency and will be needed to provide continuous communication and data about the disaster.

### Organization

To ensure that there is organization throughout the process, the plan should give clear and precise guidelines for the people while also ensuring that the links are stated. The links will also ensure that information and actions are provided in real time and that every person involved in the process is aware of all the critical happenings at every stage of the response(Coombs, 2014). The plan should also define roles and responsibilities for all the relevant stakeholders. It should be easy to understand so they cannot waste time trying to comprehend.

### Recovery Operations

The crisis management plans also help in the recovery process efforts. The plan will help in a natural transition of the operations to routine operational procedures and management. The plan will provide the team that will help in the recovery plans. This us because the plan provides phases of recovery that will ensure all the goals are met. Professional recovery bodies and agencies will use the information from the plan that will help in the recovery process.

### Decision–Making

The plan will assist the health care management with the decision-making process this is because they will be able to evaluate the extent of the disaster, the intensity of response and the amount of coordination they will need in response to ensure everything works effectively and efficiently. This plan will also help them know beforehand what emergency response strategies they will need to employ in every situation.

### Response Operations

The program also provides the health care organization with the ability to create an efficient and comprehensive crisis management team. The health organization will be able to use and manage the resources they have to plan and execute the response operations. Through the development of a plan, the health care organization will also be able to project alternative plans in case the first plan fails this making them prepared to deal with disasters while they occur.

### Planning Assumptions

To ensure that the health care organization comes up with an effective plan they will have to come up with assumptions about the conditions that are necessary to appear during the earthquake. These assumptions will help the health organizations come up with sound procedures for the emergency response (Coombs, 2014). Assumptions are always constructed using the worst case scenarios just to provide safe measures in case they occur. The health organization worst case scenarios likely to occur during the earthquake were identified. The assumptions likely to occur include a disruption of information and communication systems, electricity and water supply (Coombs, 2014). Earthquakes might destroy all the public services present in the area including roads, bridges and rail stations and passes. Damages to homes and buildings may occur leading to displacements and serious injuries of people. Following these assumptions, the health care organization needs to perform a quick damage assessment, management, and deployment of available resources and situational analysis of the possible losses. However, the planning assumptions should be flexible enough as they may change depending on the level of the disaster.

## Levels of Crisis

The plan will also identify the degree of the crisis they are facing. The earthquake is a level three crisis which is a major crisis in the organization. A major crisis is a tragedy that possesses a major risk to the health organization personnel, the patients and the resources present in the organization. The earthquake is a crisis that threatens the overall existence of an organization including the lives of the people present in the organization (Coombs, 2014). This crisis calls for an immediate and efficient emergency response measure. After identifying the type of crisis, the health organization needs to plan for the activation of the emergency response activities. The priority in an earthquake situation for a hospital is to save and protect the lives of the people around the organization. Ensure that there is coordination in activities and communication and provisional of essential services to the affected. The health organization should also ensure that they protect the environment and the resources available. Since it is a health care organization, the organizations are likely to receive a lot of incoming patients with injuries and other seeking for a place to stay. The emergency response team needs to manage and distribute the available resources to sustain the lives of the pole throughout the crisis (Coombs, 2014). The team is also responsible for taking care and treating of the patients while communicating to the relevant stakeholders about the situation at hand.

## Crisis Management Team

The plan seeks to identify and appoint a team that will help in the delivery of services, communicate, and manages the whole crisis. The management team in the health organization will act as the leaders of the emergency response team. The management will be responsible for the activation of the emergency response plan. They are responsible for the decision making of the executive actions and decision that will be needed to address the earthquake crisis at hand.

### Leadership in the Crisis Management

Leadership is an important aspect of the creation of a crisis management team. Leaders provide a direction, advice and help in the administration of the emergency plan. Leaders are also important when it comes to providing a structure o be followed during reporting and communication of critical data (Coombs, 2014). However, it is possible that the leadership of the crisis management plan may change to fit the requirements of the emergency. Leaders chosen to head such operations need to be competitive in their communication skills and resourceful to help in the smooth execution of the management plan. The leaders are responsible for identifying the tasks and assignments about the emergency. They need to assign the roles to the members and ensure that there is no conflict or mix up in the role each member is supposed to perform. The crisis managing team is composed of two groups that are the operation team and the policy group.

The policy team is responsible for creating and developing policies that will govern the operations of the emergency response. The policies are defined to ensure that each member understands what is expected of them during the period (Coombs, 2014). The policy team has the responsibility o declare the state of emergency in the health organization. They are tasked with the responsibility of approving the strategies and placing priorities on certain actions. The policy team has to communicate and coordinate with other professional crisis management teams to get professional advice and update them of the actual events and measures team in the response activity (Coombs, 2014). The policy team communicates to the operation team the instructions they need to follow and the information they require in every step of the management action. Apart from developing short-term recovery plans, the policy team is responsible for developing long-term plans for recovery after the disasters have been handled and passed.

### Operations Group

The operations group works on the actions related to the crisis management plan. They analyze and determine the impact and extent of the damage caused by the crisis. They plan the emergency procedures and make them the priority of the team members (Coombs, 2014). They are responsible for mapping of resources and distribution to throughout the health organization. The operation group communicates to the policy team about the actual situation on the ground so they can develop further instructions and strategies. The operations team monitors and evaluate the strategies they have employed in the management action. This helps in ensuring that the policies are working and in case they fail they will be able to devise the right strategies before it is too late.

## Standards, Guidelines, and Systems

The health care organization should ensure that they are following the right steps, guidelines, and criteria in the management plan. These guidelines help the health care organizations to plan effectively and perform efficiently. Several organizations have developed the guidelines that health care organizations should adopt when it comes to crisis management plans.

## The United Nation Development Program and the World Disaster Reduction Campaign

The UNDP and the Indian government developed guidelines that will help health organizations in the better management of disasters. (Aitsi-Selmi, Egawa, Sasaki, Wannous,., & Murray, 2015). The Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction: renewing the global commitment to people’s resilience, health, and well-being. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, *6*(2), 164-176.

 The Guideline for Seismic Safety of Non-Structural Elements and Contents in Hospital Buildings and the Guidelines for Hospital Emergency Preparedness Planning are the two guidelines developed. These guidelines help health organizations in getting prepared and improve their preparedness level in dealing with disasters. These guidelines assist the hospital management in developing clear steps in planning for the administration of the crisis. The instruction state that the management plans should be effective and efficient despite the limitations of the resources available to the health care organizations. The guidelines also help the health care organization identify and develop strategies to minimize risks assumptions.

## The National Incident Management System

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a guideline developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This directive should be applied at all levels of an organization as recommended by the FEMA (Barbera & Macintyre, 2014). This guideline was developed with the primary aim of enhancing cooperation and management of all stakeholders involved. This system is also created to help health organizations develop an efficient strategy and improve their level of preparedness when managing a crisis. When health organizations adopt the NIMS system, they will be able to select only the best strategies, standards, and procedures in their emergency management plan. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends that health care organizations should adopt the NIMS system in their management plan to increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

## The Occupational Safety and Health Administration

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has outlined some of the important aspects that health care organizations need to consider as they plan for the crisis management (Lundgren & McMakin 2013). According to OSHA, there are preplanning procedures that hospitals should follow which include: training of the staff members, defining roles, cleaning up patients, emergency responses, and recording events and activities. Hospitals should also identify their emergency response elements and ensure that they identify with that of the OSHA act. Hospitals should prepare pre-emergency actions that will lead to the implementation of the crisis management plan. Include and create a liaison with other emergency response organizations in the area. They should identify a team that will be responsible for treatment and care for the patients that are the nurses, doctors, and support staff. Identify other alternatives to provide treatment and services to the patients in case the hospital emergency departments are ruined or inaccessible.

## Hospital Safety Index

This system is valuable to health organizations as they can assess their functional levels when disasters occur. The Hospital Safety Index uses calculations to determine the degree of preparedness a health care organization possess against disasters (Tabatabaei & Abbasi 2016). According to an article published by the Pan American Health Organization Health Safety Index has several benefits to health care organizations. First, the tool is dependable, cost-efficient and fast. Health Safety Index is also easy to use thus making it a valuable tool that employees can be trained to use with the aim of making the plan effective. According to a study conducted by World Health Organization stated that American hospitals who adopt the use of Hospital Safety Index remain functional throughout the disaster.

A crisis management plan is a useful tool for healthcare organizations when it comes to preparedness in dealing with disasters. To ensure that the management plans are adequate health care organizations need to follow recommended guidelines, systems, and standards to ensure they develop effective plans.

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