

## Poster Session I

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### *Nursing in Disasters: Lessons Learned*

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**Purpose:** Funded by ENRS/ANF, this paper examines and analyzes, from an historical perspective, the role of nurses in responding to natural and human-made disasters to provide historical evidence that can inform disaster preparations today.

**Background:** Nurses' work in disasters is often overlooked in the news coverage and in history books. In fact, nurses were at the front lines of disasters. People faced with planning for disasters have few points of references except the past.

**Methods:** Using historical methodology, this paper relies on case studies of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot to illustrate nurses' activities in different disaster scenes. Analysis includes examining nurses' work within the full social, political, and economic contexts in which they occurred, and it reveals how issues of race, class, gender, and ethnicity operated in society. Primary sources include archival materials published by nurses at the scene in the form of letters and written reminiscences.

**Results:** Nurses restored a sense of order in the aftermath of chaotic tragedies. They participated in initial emergency responses and also afterward as they prevented disease, dealt with grieving families, and educated the public. Their roles at the local level intersected with the American Red Cross (ARC), American Nurses Association, the U.S. Public Health Service, and other federal and state organizations. The paper concludes with an explication of how the ARC officially entered into disaster nursing.

**Conclusions and Implications:** The importance of this research lies in its historical approach to uncovering the activities of those who nursed in disasters, and it reveals insights for nurses and other health care providers who strive to take a holistic approach to patient care. It also helps in understanding nurses' work. Nurses' senses sharpened as they became totally absorbed in their tasks. They turned disasters into opportunities, and they showed pride in their work while crossing cultural, geographical, and professional boundaries.