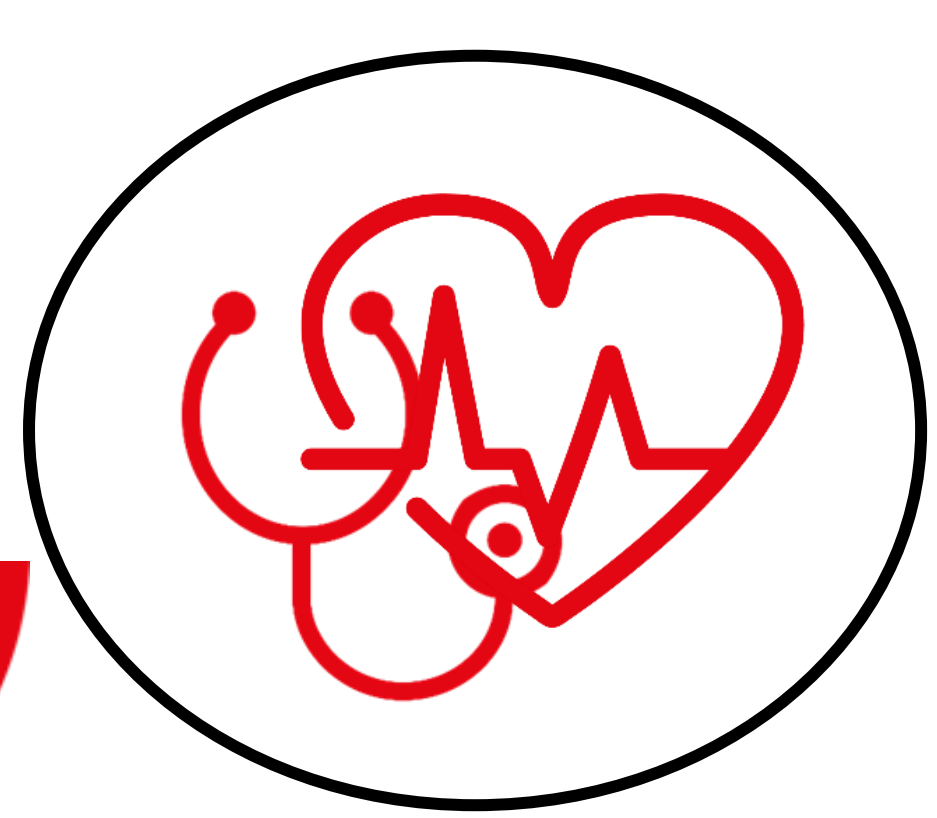


Cancer Care in Humanitarian Crises: The Role of Global Nursing Organisations

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HIGHLIGHTS

1. Humanitarian crises in regions like Sudan, Syria, Gaza, and Ukraine have led to a near-total collapse of cancer care, critically impacting thousands of lives.
2. Nurses, often the backbone of healthcare delivery, are essential in maintaining cancer care amid crises but face severe shortages, limited resources, and a lack of consistent support.
3. A unified global response from nursing organisations is urgently needed to advocate for healthcare worker protection, sustain cancer services, and develop robust support frameworks in conflict zones.



Background

- Humanitarian crises, driven by conflicts and natural disasters, severely disrupt healthcare systems, with oncology services among the most affected.
- In regions like Sudan, Syria, and Gaza, ongoing conflicts have led to a near-total collapse of cancer care, putting thousands of lives at risk.
- The war in Ukraine, since February 2022, has significantly damaged healthcare infrastructure, leading to a critical shortage of medical personnel and resources, further straining cancer services¹.
- Nurses, often at the forefront of healthcare delivery, play a vital role in maintaining cancer care during these crises. However, nursing organisations and unions face significant challenges in providing consistent support and advocacy for these healthcare workers and patients.

Methods

- We carried out a review of the impact of humanitarian crises on cancer care, focusing on the critical role of nursing and nursing organisations, such as the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).
- The analysis draws on recent reports from the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other relevant sources to examine the disruption of cancer services.
- The role of nurses in mitigating these disruptions, and the urgent need for enhanced support and training for nurses in conflict zones.
- The response of global nursing organisations and unions to these challenges is critically assessed.

Results

- The findings underscore the devastating impact of humanitarian crises on cancer services.
- In Sudan, the civil conflict has led to the closure of most oncology centres, with only two out of 15 centres offering comprehensive care by August 2023².
- In Gaza, ongoing conflict has halted all cancer treatments, with significant losses of trained oncologists and nurses.
- In Ukraine, attacks on hospitals and medical facilities have crippled the healthcare system, severely limiting cancer care. These disruptions will certainly lead to patients with curable cancers to progress to incurable stages due to delayed diagnosis and treatment³.
- In Lebanon, a growing number of health facilities have had to shut down, particularly in the south. Out of 207 primary health care centres and dispensaries in conflict-affected areas, 100 are now closed⁴.
- Despite these critical issues, the response from global nursing organisations has been inconsistent, with varying levels of engagement across different crises.



Policy Implications

- **Nursing organisations and unions worldwide urgently need to take a more proactive and unified approach in responding to the collapse of cancer care in humanitarian crises. Actions to advocate for the protection of healthcare workers, ensure the continuity of cancer services,**
- **Develop coordinated global frameworks to support nurses in these challenging environments is needed. By leading these efforts, nursing can play a crucial role in mitigating the severe impacts on cancer care in conflict-affected regions and uphold their commitment to global health and human rights.**

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