

Japanese Red Cross Society Emergency Response: Focusing on the Nepal earthquake and the Kumamoto earthquake Relief Activities

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Abstract

The Emergency Response Unit (ERU) is the global disaster response tool of the International Red Cross, which is the world largest humanitarian organization. The ERU is the unit of the relief specialists and the pre-packed equipment for immediate deployment in disaster situations. Since 2001, the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) deployed the basic health care (BHC) ERUs, which provides the basic health care in the disaster affected areas. Furthermore, in the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake, the JRCS ERU specialists who experienced the overseas missions were mobilized in the immediate medical treatment. The author (Shirosita) was also engaged in the both earthquake relief activities in Nepal and Japan. Therefore, this comparative study presents the JRCS medical relief activities in the both earthquakes.

In response the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the JRCS immediately sent a BHC-ERU first rotation team and the ERU team initiated activity with the Primary Health Care Center (PHCC) Melamchi in Sindhupalchok district, one of the most severely affected districts. Since 29 April, a total of 14,416 patients visited the center over 13 weeks. The ERU team received a lot of trauma cases. Approximately 24% of patients were trauma cases, and 208 minor surgeries were operated. The ERU team treated patients who required preservation treatment, such as fracture reduction or splint fixation. The severe patients who had the hip joint dislocation or femur fractures were referred to the hospital in Kathmandu. The ratio of trauma patients decreased from 45.5% to 20% one month after the earthquake. The JRCS continued the clinical activities until 31 July to hand over its relief activities to the PHCC Melamchi. In the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes, the JRCS Kumamoto Hospital was the nearest hospital from the epicenter; in total, 2,839 patients visited our hospital within one week of the earthquake. Similar to the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, our hospital received a number of the patients who got orthopedic injuries. Though the locations and social backgrounds in both earthquakes were different, however, in terms of the types of the injuries, the authors found some similarities in the patients in both disasters. In this sense, the experience, which gained in the overseas missions, were useful in the domestic disaster response.