

# การเตรียมพร้อมทางการพยาบาลของวิทยาลัยพยาบาลทหารบก

## Nursing Preparedness in the Royal Thai Army Nursing College

บทความวิชาการ

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ภัยธรรมชาติหรือภัยที่เกิดจาก การกระทำของมนุษย์เกิดขึ้นอย่างต่อเนื่องและเกิดขึ้นได้ในทุกพื้นที่ สร้างความเสียหายอย่างรุนแรงทั้งต่อชีวิตและทรัพย์สิน วิทยาลัยพยาบาลกองทัพบก เป็นหนึ่งในสถาบันเหล่าที่พร้อมด้วยแนวทางที่เน้นการผลิตบัณฑิตให้มีศักยภาพในการดูแลผู้บาดเจ็บในภาวะวิกฤตและชุดเชิญที่เกิดจากมนุษย์หรือเกิดจากภัยธรรมชาติ บทความนี้ได้เน้นเกี่ยวกับ ประวัติความเป็นมาจากการตั้งปัจจุบัน วิสัยทัศน์ การจัดหลักสูตร การเรียนการสอน รวมถึงอนาคตและเป้าหมายของวิทยาลัยพยาบาลกองทัพบกในการผลิตบัณฑิตที่สามารถตอบสนองผู้รับบริการในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ อย่างยั่งยืนและมีประสิทธิภาพสูงสุด

### Abstract

Natural and man-made catastrophic events continue to occur throughout the world. Disasters may cause damage ranging from major structural damage to loss of property and man power. The Royal Thai Army Nursing College is one of the best institutes and training facilities preparing Army nurses to respond to and deal with emergency situations. Army nurses are well trained and prepared in specific techniques and procedures for handling emergency situations. This article will briefly focus on the importance of its history, current status, vision, nursing curriculum, learning activities, and the future of the quality and competency of Army nurses in a changing era.

**Keywords:** Nursing Preparedness, The Royal Thai Army Nursing College

### Background

Disaster happens frequently in various places all over the world. Disaster comes not only in the form of natural events, but also as man-made catastrophes, often occurring simultaneously. In Thailand, people have been suffering from several natural disasters such as typhoons, flooding, mudslides, and Tsunamis.

Army nurses are a very important component of the health care team involved in these kinds of serious situations. These accounts dramatically illustrate how disaster can thrust nurses in all settings and specialties into situations where knowledge of disaster management is essential. The nurses' role in the health care

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team often put them in positions of leadership. Nurses are generally seen as being exceptionally versatile, and are likely to be asked to perform tasks or assume roles that are beyond their domain (Gebbie & Qureshi, 2002).

The Royal Thai Army Nursing College is the only army nursing college in Thailand which prepares qualified nursing and military personnel to attain national standards of academic and professional excellence, and graduate disciplined, principled military nurses who are energetic in their approach to learning and practicing their profession in order to bring value of health services to people, thereby enabling them to live full and happy lives. The RTANC's main focus is to serve the nation in all aspects of health care, but especially in emergency situations by the following the RTANC's vision, "To be the very best institution of higher learning of the Army, and to produce professional nurses in accordance with the highest nursing standards for the nation".

The RTANC has been established for almost 50 years, and continues to undergo academic improvement and curriculum development since its inception. This article will focus on the details of its history, its current status, and its future in emergency nursing preparedness.

### Historical Challenge

After World War II, Thailand had a shortage of health care teams, including those in the Army. This shortage became critical in 1961. This was important because the Army, like all military branches, had a great need for nurses to administer care to their soldiers.

At this time in the history of the Royal Thai Army, in 1963, the commanding general, Salit Tanarattana, established the Royal Thai Army School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health which was under the command of the Army Medical Department. In 1964, the first class enrolled 37 students. They received their diploma in Nursing, Midwifery and Public health after completing a four-year program, and were awarded the rank of Second Master Sergeant and served in 37 Army Hospitals throughout the country.

In 1974, the diploma program in Nursing, Midwifery, and Public Health was revised and upgraded to a three and a half year program with the admission of high school students who graduated from grade 12. Those who graduated from the diploma nursing program received the Certificate in Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health, which was equivalent to the associate degree, and qualified them to work as registered nurses with the rank of Second Lieutenant.

In 1981, as a result of changes in the nursing education in Thailand, the 3 ½ year program became a 4-year undergraduate level program. The candidates for admission had to have completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade of high school with a minimum of 24 credits in basic sciences and math. This revised nursing program provided students with a liberal arts and professional education. Upon completion of the requirements, the graduates received a Certificate in Nursing which was equivalent to a Bachelor of Nursing Science.

In 1984, the program was revised again. After the students completed their 4 year

requirements, they received a Bachelor of Nursing degree. In the same year, the Royal Thai Army School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health became the Royal Thai Army Nursing College, and in 1985, the Royal Thai Army Nursing College became affiliated with the Faculty of Nursing, Mahidol University. From the first class of 37 students in 1964, until 2005 the student body consisted solely of female students. From 2005 to the present, the student body has increased to 100 with 10% being male students.

### Current Status

Line of Command, Roles and Responsibilities. The Royal Thai Army Nursing College is under the direction of Phramongkutklao Medical Center and the Royal Thai Army Medical Department, and is considered one of the leading nursing colleges in Thailand. It has been approved by the Royal Thai Army, the Ministry of University Affairs and is fully accredited by the Thai Nursing Council.

### Philosophy

The over arching philosophy of the Royal Thai Army Nursing College is to be the very best institution of its kind. The Royal Thai Army Nursing College is committed to preparing qualified nursing and military personnel to attain national standards of academic and professional excellence, by graduating disciplined, principled Army nurses who are energetic in their approach to learning and practicing their profession.

### Nursing Curriculum

The curriculum structure of the Royal Thai Army Nursing College has been designed to meet

the requirements of the Ministry of University Affairs. To fulfill the college requirements for graduation and to earn a BNS, 147 credits are required to be completed within 4 years. The curriculum, revised every 5 years, requires students to complete a total of 147 credits in both theory and practice.

The Royal Thai Army Nursing College is comprised of three divisions: (1) the Administration Division, (2) the Academic Affairs Division, and (3) the Student Affairs Division. The Administration Division is responsible for the general functions of the Headquarter Office, which includes the following four departments: (1) administration and personnel department, (2) evaluation and statistic department, (3) support department, and (4) financial department. The Academic Affairs Division is responsible for all planning, directing, and administering nursing curriculums of the college. It consists of seven departments and one section. The Student Affairs Division is responsible for students conduct, welfare, and counseling. It provides for accommodations and meals for students, and supports extracurricular activities including sports, general recreation, and cultural activities. The Student Affairs Division consists of the headquarters of students and student companies. The student commanders are in charge of Platoon leaders. The programs offered by the Academic Affairs Division include: (1) Bachelor of Nursing Program, (2) Nursing Specialty Program, (3) Practical Nursing Program, and (4) Other Nursing Programs. The Baccalaureate curriculum which is been revised every 5 years requires the student to complete a total of 147 credits in both theory and practice. These credits are apportioned across the

following areas: (A) General education, (B) Special education, (C) Elective courses, and (D) military courses

The mission of the Royal Thai Army Nursing College has 4 main components: (1) To produce and develop the highest quality professional nurses, (2) To provide educational opportunities to society, (3) To support staff research, and (4) To conserve and maintain the Thai culture and traditions.

In order to meet this mission objective, The Royal Thai Army Nursing College has developed a five credit disaster preparedness course to strengthen its current curriculum and meet the competency requirement in this area. As supported by the Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (2007), every school of nursing should include disaster and emergency preparedness in the curriculum. RTANC activities in the 4 year-program are as follows.

*In the first year:* The teaching-learning process emphasizes general and military education. Freshmen students obtain military skills from the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy School.

*During the sophomore year,* the emphasis is on special and nursing education by practicing nursing skills at Phramongkutklao Hospital, the largest Army Hospital, which has been approved and accredited for meeting the highest standards as a quality health care facility.

*For Juniors,* they practice what they have learned toward their career in both hospitals and the community. The curriculum is also focus on nursing preparedness and competency of care

during disasters and combat situations. Our nursing students have opportunities to help victims of disasters such as tsunami affected regions and flooded areas in Thailand.

*Fourth year students* learn research methodologies, develop research topics, and present their research projects in addition to continuing their nursing practice in the Phramongkutklao Hospital, the community, and in other Army hospitals throughout Thailand. Students who have excellent research projects have an opportunity to present their research at the Asian-Pacific Military Medicine Conference. Students must also be able to apply their knowledge and experience to assist injured victims in all critical situations including natural disasters, civil unrest, terrorist events, and battle fields.

The Royal Thai Army Nursing College also offers post graduate certificates in the programs of Administrative Nurse Specialist, Critical Care and Emergency Nurse Specialist, and Nurse Practitioner. These programs are opened yearly. Furthermore, the Royal Thai Army Nursing College offers Practical Nursing Program which is a one-year course and open every year based on the needs of the Army and society.

Since 1998, The Royal Thai Army Nursing College has been conducting education quality assurance by performing internal audits annually. In 2010, The Royal Thai Army Nursing College was evaluated and accredited by external auditors: The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, the Army Training Command, and the Armed Forces Education Department. As a result of these audits, The Royal Thai Army

Nursing College obtained accreditation until 2015 as an institution which provides quality nursing education from the Thai Nursing Council and Midwifery.

### **What distinguishes the Royal Thai Army Nursing College from other nursing colleges in Thailand ?**

RTANC has a unique focus on disaster preparedness whether from natural disasters or man-made. This focus is designed to enable our nurses to be uniquely qualified to assist the civilian population as well as the Army and other military branches whether in combat situations or as a result of civil unrest, terrorist activity and natural disasters. RTANC believes this training is of critical importance, given the incidence of political upheavals, extreme climatic events, and the vagaries of war that break out almost daily around the world. Our nurses are trained to be at the forefront of patient care, to be some of the early responders when events of this type threaten the well being of our citizens, or those of other countries that may need our help. Our Thai Army nurses are trained to be critically important partners in emergency preparedness teams, primary health care teams, and professional soldiers.

### **Why disaster/emergency preparedness is so important for the Royal Thai Army ?**

As mentioned previously, Thai army nurses had, for decades, as their main mission, to serve soldiers injured in combat. Today, have had to change their focus to include tending not only to soldiers, but also to citizens in situations where there are mass casualties resulting from various kinds of disasters, such as earth quake,

flooding, drought, mudslides, civil unrest, and terrorist activities. Thus, army nurses need to have comprehensive knowledge of disaster & emergency preparedness, and be fully prepared to treat a wide range of injuries resulting from any type of disaster in order to effectively perform their roles. In addition, army nurses have basic military training which informs their understanding of how to safely transport victims using proper immobilization techniques, and using basic life saving equipment in disaster situations. Army nurses must also be in good physical condition in order to help victims in crisis situation, and save themselves. Military basic training plays a critical role in assuring that army nurses work effectively in both combat zones and areas of civil unrest.

### **Future Focus**

The Royal Thai Army Nursing College is committed to constantly improve the quality of education and its relevance to the communities it serves. It also is committed to developing international networks for exchange of knowledge and conforming to the very highest standards for all Royal Thai Army Nursing College faculty and staff. According to The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2001), reports that professional nurse as a graduate of a baccalaureate program who is capable of providing holistic care to clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, can practice independently within domain of nursing practice roles and collaboratively with other health care team members, and acts responsibly in the events of disaster. It is also important to improve teaching strategies, and redesign of curriculum content appropriate to today changing world for effective learning process,

as well as cooperation with hospitals and other health care facilities for future preparedness. (Ireland et al, 2006; Pattiilo, 2003; Sullivan, Hirst, & Cronenwett, 2009). It is the intention of the Royal Thai Army Nursing College to become a “Learning Organization” in all facets and improve its research base to develop greater expertise administratively, scholastically, educationally, and across all management and hierarchical lines.

The on-going challenge of the Royal Thai Army Nursing College is to be able to take qualified high school graduates, train, educate and mold them into effective communicators, disciplined Army officers, and committed health care practitioners knowledgeable about strategies enabling them to deal with all manners of acute and chronic health problems, as well as emergency situations. Students must be able to apply their knowledge and experience to assist the injured in all critical situations including natural disasters, civil unrest, and during war. Our graduates must also be compassionate community leaders who are capable to cross cultural and educational barriers as they bring the highest quality health care to those who need it.

As a result of our implemented educational programs, graduated nurses have effectively participated in UN missions to East Timor, Iraq, and other countries when disasters of any kind strike.

Members of the Royal Thai Army Nursing College are proud of our involvement in the comprehensive training of those with only raw potential into specialized and highly skilled personnel with a high degree of competency of caring for civilian and military personnel when

disaster or combat situations strike.

We all aim to see that the Royal Thai Army Nursing College continues to be the leading educational institution of its type with an outstanding reputation for producing qualified nursing personnel for the Army and the country as captured by our motto “Great discipline, life-long learning, morality, and nursing care quality.”

### Summary

Natural and man-made catastrophic events will continue to occur throughout the world. Disasters may cause damage ranging from loss of power to major structural damage to property, to physical injuries to personnel, including loss of lives. In the event of emergencies, all stake holders must be involved in the successful resolution of these situations. Army nurses who are well trained and prepared in this specific techniques and procedures for handling emergency situations will be able to effectively provide quality of care and help victims during life threatening circumstances. We are proud to play such an important part on the emergency and crisis preparedness team in order to help the public whenever necessary.

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