

AUSMAT: challenges and experiences in the development of an acute care disaster workforce

Bronte Martin

National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre

The Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) program is funded by Australia's Department of Health through the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC) to maintain and deploy an acute care medical capability to sudden onset disasters and medical emergencies. In the past 10 years AUSMATs have deployed in response across a diverse range of disaster settings, demonstrating a distinctly unique and adaptable capability throughout the region.

The austere disaster environment creates many unique health care challenges. In the context of overwhelming demand, resource limitation and a low-tech environment, the clinical workforce must be adaptable and multiskilled in order to adequately meet the needs of the population at risk. In addition, the absence of high-tech modern diagnostic tools in the disaster setting necessitates a return to the core clinical assessment skills as foundation principles of care. Many parallels and comparisons can be drawn from those experiences of clinicians in the remote and rural health care settings.