

28th International Conference on

FAMILY NURSING & HEALTHCARE

September 11-13, 2017 San Antonio, USA

FEMA response in rural Appalachia: A tale of miscommunication, unrealistic expectations and “hurt, hurt hurt”

Lauren Oppizzi

The University of Tennessee Knoxville, USA

In spring of 2012, rural southeastern Kentucky was impacted by torrential storms and flooding that activated federal disaster response through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This qualitative research examines the experience of community members affected by the Kentucky floods of 2012 (N=9) and describes their interactions with FEMA representatives, in their own voice, thereby giving insight into gaps in rural disaster response. The principal investigator spent six weeks living in the community, conducting open-ended interviews. Narratives were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a phenomenological approach. Five themes characterized residents' experiences of working with FEMA: (1) All we lost; (2) hurt, hurt, hurt; (3) There was not enough damage; (4) that's the trouble with lack of communication; and (5) We at least had hopes. Participants found FEMA representatives to be detached, disrespectful and misleading, giving false hopes and actual or implied promises that were unfulfilled. Gaps in rural response have significant implications for practice, research and policy, and illustrate the importance of clear communication and interprofessional collaboration in rural communities.