

Session 2

Chairs: TBA

Barriers and Facilitators of Health Care Services at Natural Disasters in Iran

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Introduction: Iran has a long history in coping with disasters from natural hazards. In recent years, there has been an average of one earthquake with extremely high human and property losses every five years. The 2003 Bam, the 2004 Baladeh, and the 2005 Zaranj earthquakes are the most prominent recent earthquakes. Assessing obstacles and facilitators of health care services during natural disasters is very important. The aim of this study is to assess the mentioned factors of health care services at the time of disaster based on the experiences of healthcare providers.

Methods: The present study was conducted using grounded theory at Bam just after earthquake. The study participants included 17 individuals of multidisciplinary team and three Bam residents. Semi-structural interviews were used for data gathering. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and an analysis was conducted according to the Strauss and Corbin method.

Results: The study participants identified several primary factors as barriers including (1) coordination; (2) management; (3) human factors; (4) information; and (5) culture. The participants identified the following as facilitators: (1) management services; (2) cultural and educational factors; (3) management unity; (4) necessity of coordination and cultural issues; and (5) human needs meeting based on culture.

Conclusions: In spite of the other studies that introduced lack of resources as main obstacle, this study has shown that, lack of coordination in management, human resources, and information broadcasting is the most significant barrier for delivering health care services at disasters in Iran specially at Bam earthquake. Researchers have mentioned other contrary findings in paper.

Keywords: barriers; facilitators; grounded theory; health services; natural disasters

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Management of the Dead in Mass Disasters: South Asian Perspectives

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During the past two decades, management of the dead in mass-casualty incidents has become an issue of serious concern in the management of mass disasters during the past two decades. Although natural and manmade disasters of large magnitude are familiar to south Asian countries, they did not have a collective vision or standard strategy for the

management of mass fatalities. However, with the frequent occurrence of major disasters during the recent few years, many countries in the south Asian region have realized the importance of disaster victim identification (DVI) and have set up DVI centers, developed management capacity and adopted DVI protocols with modifications particular to the local context.

However, more effort must be directed towards raising standards of DVI in regard to transport and temporary storage facilities, identification procedures, documentation methods, and training of necessary personnel. Management of mass fatalities is essentially a multidisciplinary, multistage process that requires extensive preplanning and rapid activation. It is a highly skilled, integrated task and a sensitive issue from the point of public opinion that requires meticulous coordination of the political hierarchy of the affected community. Therefore, there must exist a well-established policy and strategy at the governmental level that disseminates multi disciplinary services at the bottom level with regard to the management of the dead in a disaster situation.

Keywords: dead; disaster victim identification; management; policy; process; standards

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A New Definition of Disaster

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It has always been difficult to define “disaster”. Each profession involved in emergency preparedness and response has tried to make a definition according to its own criteria; however, they could not attain a definition that generally was approved by other professions and interest groups.

From the most comprehensive perspective, a disaster is a chain of events that terminates human life or results in destructive and devastating effects that will cause disabilities. The events that lead to a disaster are part of the routine life cycle and time cycle. The event has the power to terminate human life individually or collectively, starts with the activation of any kind of hazard, occurs due to inadequacy of human beings to eliminate the created effect though using all within their individual and/or collective capacities of physics, technology, psychology, and sociology. A short definition of a disaster is the loss of life (lives) as a result of responsive inadequacy in the “Impact-Response Dynamic” occurs under supra/extraordinary situations. In order to define an event as a disaster or for a potential to cause a disaster, two major criteria are required, “inadequacy” and “mortality”. All cases in which both of these criteria are definitely present are regarded as “Extraordinary Situations (EOS)”. When the human beings are not inadequate to respond to the event and the event does not result in mortality or injury, the EOSs should not be defined as a disaster.

Keywords: chain of events; definition; disaster; preparedness; response

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