

Continuous Healthcare Support for People Living in Temporary Housings by Local Hospital Teams; Challenges After Earthquake, Tsunami and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster in 2011

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Study/Objective: To assess the roles of local hospital teams, of continuous community healthcare support, during the recovery phase from disaster.

Background: In March 2011, Minamisoma City had severe damages from the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident. Over 5 years have passed since then. According to the statistics from Minamisoma City, 14,563 people have been (still) living as refugees, and 2,453 people have been living in the temporary housings (as of November 2016). Because of the rising concerns with healthcare problems, our hospital volunteer teams have provided continuous healthcare support programs to refugees in the temporary housings since 2013. Our teams have consisted of medical doctors, residents, as well as medical students and paramedics. We have provided them a series of free evening lecture courses (ie. metabolic syndrome, locomotive syndrome, dementia and stroke) and personal health consultations every other month. Here, we assess how the programs have influenced the community health in the affected areas.

Methods: In March 2016, a self-entry style questionnaire was performed by each participant, prior to informed consent by the volunteer staff at 8 (out of 33) meeting places of temporary housings. The questionnaire included their basic information, impressions of our programs (ie. interest, achievement, satisfaction, etc.) and their health concerns.

Results: Seventy-seven participants (21 males and 56 females) answered the questionnaire. The average age of participants was 73.7 ± 9.9 years old. Eighty-eight percent answered their reason for participation was 'Interest'. Ninety-seven percent answered they felt 'Very familiar' or 'Familiar' to our staff. The average subjective level of achievement was 3.5/5. The average degree of satisfaction was 9.3/10. Seventy-one percent have taken a personal health consultation.

Conclusion: We found that participants were mostly elderly people. Continuous healthcare support by local hospital teams has been considered to be effective at recovery phase. It is essential for healthcare professionals to take care of a community.

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Occupational Health Risks of Health Workers at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital

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Study/Objective: This study sought to identify the occupational health risks that clinical/non-clinical staff at KATH are exposed to.

Background: Occupational Health Assessment is the identification, evaluation, and control of risks merging from workplace hazards that affect workers' physical, mental, and social well-being. Mostly, employers look out for the positive end products of the work done and ignore the safety measures put in place to protect employees from health risks they are exposed to. Health workers are exposed to different hazards due to the nature of their work. This study sought to identify the occupational health risks that clinical/non-clinical staff at KATH are exposed to.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was adopted for the study, and the study site was chosen to be KATH. The sample was chosen by stratified random sampling. Data were entered in EPI-info software and analysis was done using SPSS. Logistic regression assesses relations and significance.

Results: Out of 178 respondents, 129 (72.47%) reported exposure to hazards at various departments of work. The study revealed that airborne diseases were the most widespread hazard reported (72.87%), followed by sharps (62.79%), chemicals (42.64%), and burns (10.85%). The majority of all respondents 165 (92.70%) had knowledge on occupational health risk, of which 60% were clinical staff. There were 86 (48%) of respondents reporting exposure to hazards, indicated having been provided with protective equipment to ensure safety; 83 (47%) indicated no protective equipment; nine (5%) were unsure of the availability of any such equipment. Awareness of occupational health policies was associated with training given at recruitment. Also, there was an association between health problems developed and category of staff, exposure to hazards in the working environment, protective equipment provided, and number of years worked at KATH.

Conclusion: The health workers (clinical/non-clinical) are exposed mostly to airborne diseases and pricking by sharps, but most were not adequately protected.

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Helping Health Information Go Viral: Building a Disaster Information Specialist Network

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Study/Objective: A program was developed to create a network of disaster health information specialists across the country who could be responsive to disasters by providing timely, accurate, disaster health information throughout all phases of a disaster to the public health and disaster response workforce.

Background: The program consists of a three-pronged approach: 1. A series of freely-available, online training courses that provide a foundation to build capacity for public health personnel, librarians, emergency workforce, and others. 2. Monthly webinars provide the opportunity to hear from experts on the latest issues in disaster medicine and public health. 3. A community of practice functions through an online discussion forum, email updates, and social media.