

Characteristics and Outcomes Among Patients with Acute Extremity Wounds Due to Gunshots Versus Bomb Blasts – A Prospective Cohort Analysis from Two Civilian Hospitals in Iraq and Jordan

Andreas Ålgå MD, PhD¹, Ghazal Haque MD¹,
Rawand Haweizy MD², Khaldoon Bashaireh MD³,
Jonas Malmstedt MD, PhD¹

1. Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden
2. Hawler Medical University, Erbil, Iraq
3. University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

Introduction: Gunshots and bomb blasts are important causes of injury within conflict zones and extremities are frequently affected. There is a paucity of research on the characteristics and outcomes among civilians with conflict-related extremity injuries.

Method: We performed a prospective cohort analysis utilizing data collected during a randomized trial at two civilian hospitals in Jordan and Iraq between 2015 and 2019. Adult patients who presented within 72 hours of sustaining an extremity injury requiring surgical care were included. We used mechanism of injury (gunshot versus bomb blast) as the exposure and wound closure by day five as the primary outcome measure.

Results: The population was predominantly young men (n=163, 94% male, median age 29 years), injured by gunshot (61%) or bomb blasts (39%). Compared to the gunshot group, participants in the bomb blast group had more concomitant injuries (32/63 [51%] vs 11/100 [11%]; p<0.001), larger wounds (median area 100 cm² [IQR 50–145] vs 53 cm² [IQR 25–78]; p<0.001) and more frequent infections (16/63 [25%] vs 13/100 [13%]; p=0.04). Wound closure by day five was achieved in 25% (n=16/63) of the bomb blast group and 74% (n=74/100) of the gunshot group (p<0.001). This difference remained after controlling for confounding factors (OR 4.7; 95% CI 1.6–13.7).

Conclusion: In this first prospective cohort analysis of civilians with acute conflict-associated injuries, those with extremity wounds caused by bomb blasts had worse outcomes than those with gunshot wounds. Our findings may prove useful to inform treatment protocols for civilians in armed conflict settings.

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Crisis Communications for Leaders in Disasters

Joseph McIsaac MD, MS, MBA, CPE, FASA

University of Connecticut, Farmington, USA. US National Disaster Medical System, Washington, USA

Introduction: The COVID-19 crisis stressed the medical system and required leaders to rise to the occasion. Some institutions were very successful while others floundered. We saw this at every level of government as well as in healthcare. Applying the principles of crisis leadership and communication (and avoiding pitfalls) will increase our readiness to respond effectively during stressful times.

Method: Literature review and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Results: While there is robust literature on the topics of crisis communications and leadership this training is lacking in healthcare circles. This poster aims to introduce the subject and advocate for increased training in Crisis Communications.

The US CDC has developed a freely downloadable training manual, along with tools for rapidly developing a crisis message. Furthermore, a checklist to help with the presentation and a list of communication pitfalls to avoid are included.

Conclusion: Leaders can use these tools to prepare in advance for crisis communications, avoiding common mistakes that reduce communication effectiveness.

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Measuring Patient Hazard Exposure—The Missing Middle in Disaster Mortality Prevention

Gerard Finnigan PhD, MICD, MPHTM

Deakin University, Waurn Ponds, Australia

Introduction: Interventions that mitigate hazard exposures offer the most efficient means of reducing disaster mortality. However, such interventions require an evidence base that describes the relationship between hazard exposure dynamics and health risk. Medical practitioners have long used patient specific hazard exposure assessments to determine acute and chronic disease risk and align medical treatment and care. This study compared patient-specific hazard exposure data collected from people seeking healthcare during seven different natural hazard disaster events and compared the minimum patient data set standards recommended at the time.

Method: Patient data collection forms used by primary and secondary health care providers during emergency health and medical responses to seven natural hazard disasters were reviewed. Data fields relating to potential exposure characteristics were recorded and compared to patient data fields used by health services prior to the disaster event. A literature review of definitions of disaster ‘exposure’ adopted by UN disaster management agencies were compared with the health and medical sector.

Results: Only the SARS-CoV-2 disaster consistently assessed and recorded details about patient exposure characteristics. Patient hazard exposure data was typically limited to the time of onset of symptoms and duration relative to hazard impact. Little qualitative or quantitative assessment of the magnitude of exposure to any hazard was included, or patient-environmental data. While variables of hazard and vulnerability were extensively studied, and discussed in scholarly and industry literature, the concept of exposure received comparably little attention.

Conclusion: Building an evidence base to correlate hazard and environmental exposure characteristics with patient health effects must be prioritized, especially for cohorts vulnerable from physiological or co-morbid factors. Such advances can be made through simple inclusions in minimum patient dataset

recommendations. Understanding hazard–exposure dynamics are vital for advancing emergency health responses toward early intervention and health protection from future hazards that threaten functioning of whole health systems.

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Towards a Multidisciplinary Guideline for Psychosocial Crisis Management

Wera Hoof MSc¹, Noortje Jansen MSc², Charlie Steen²

1. ARQ Centre of Expertise for the Impact of Disasters and Crises, Diemen, Netherlands
2. ARQ Centre of Expertise for the Impact of Disasters and Crises, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Introduction: The Dutch Multidisciplinary Guideline for Psychosocial support during Disasters and Crises (2014) contains general principles and recommendations for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to those affected by disasters, crises or other potentially traumatic events. Changes in the field of MHPSS, ‘new’ types of crises (such as social unrest and long-term crises) as well as new (scientific) knowledge have been identified. A revision of the guideline is therefore necessary to ensure that the document is in line with the current scientific evidence and practice.

Method: The aim of the revision is to regain national consensus on the updated recommendations for providing optimal MHPSS in the event of disasters and crises. Needs and challenges identified in the national field formed the basis for the revision, together with the existing recommendations from 2014. The setup of the revised guideline is in accordance with the Dutch EBRO method [Evidence Based Guideline Development]. The knowledge input was twofold: first, a systematic literature search was conducted in PsycINFO, Ovid Medline, Embase en PTSDpubs. Further, a multidisciplinary working group was formed with representatives from the domains of practice, policy and research. A consensus process was followed to test and revise the guideline.

Results: The literature search yielded 3,845 unique articles and 180 met the inclusion criteria. Based on the scoping review, supplemented with literature and expert knowledge, the recommendations have been updated and revised. The majority of the recommendations are still valid. They have been adapted based on current literature. Knowledge of the two new themes: ‘long-term and creeping crises’ and ‘social media’ is translated into recommendations in the field of MHPSS.

Conclusion: The revision will lead to a more complete starting point for additional guidelines, perspective for action and protocols for specific users and applications.

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Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Ukrainian Refugees in the Netherlands from Fragmentation to Integration

Marjonneke Vetten-Mc Mahon MSc¹, Noor Jansen MSc², Femke Zwart MSc¹

1. National Institute for Health and Environment, Bilthoven, Netherlands
2. ARQ National Psychotrauma Centre, Diemen, Netherlands

Introduction: More than 7.8 million people fled Ukraine since the invasion of Russia and are registered as refugees in Europe (as of November 1, 2022). Almost 89,000 of them are registered to the Netherlands (as of November 3, 2022). It is expected that this number will rise. Appropriate and accessible Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is essential for conflict survivors to address psychological harm from traumatic events and distress both during the escape and after, while trying to adjust to an unfamiliar place. Receiving countries have the obligation to provide MHPSS as part of their international commitment to the right to health. This is recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Nevertheless, the Netherlands is failing to honor this commitment with fragmented services that do not seem to fit support needs. The longer it takes to put a comprehensive approach in place, the greater the damage to the refugees will be. This interactive session aims to shed light on practical challenges and opportunities for the implementation of appropriate, accessible and integrated MHPSS. What is needed to go from a fragmented to an integrated approach?

Method: Being active as advisors in the field of Disaster Health and MHPSS in the Netherlands, the presenters review their experienced challenges thereafter opportunities and good practices are explored together with the participants.

Results: Experienced challenges include complexity, fragmented organization, lack of ownership and inadequate access to knowledge and information about support needs.

Conclusion: More is needed to meet the commitment to the right of health and to provide adequate MHPSS to refugees in the Netherlands and beyond. International exchange and learning can help us to understand and overcome implementation challenges.

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Pediatric Disaster Readiness and Community Hospitals in a Rural American State

Randy Kearns DHA, MSA^{1,2}, Toni Gross MD, MPH^{3,4,5}, Amanda Perry M.Ed., NRP⁶

1. University of New Orleans, New Orleans, USA
2. University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Chapel Hill, USA
3. Children's Hospital of New Orleans, New Orleans, USA
4. Tulane University, New Orleans, USA
5. Louisiana State University Health Science Center, New Orleans, USA
6. Louisiana Department of Health, Baton Rouge, USA

Introduction: Pediatric patients represent a small (but important) subset of the patient population routinely visiting emergency departments (ED) each year. With the aim of better understanding the disaster preparedness level for pediatric-