

Characteristics of Medical Teams in Disaster

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Abbreviations:

EMT: emergency medical team
FMT: foreign medical team
WHO: World Health Organization

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Regarding *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* article:

Oldenburger D, Baumann A, Banfield L. Characteristics of medical teams in disasters.

This report, as far as I can determine, did not include emergency medical team (EMT) or foreign medical team (FMT) in the search criteria and so seems to have missed out the crucial work of the World Health Organization (WHO; Geneva, Switzerland) initiative on foreign, now emergency, medical teams.¹ Many of the comments in the paper are describing the lack of preparedness of those who have responded in the past, and the work of the WHO initiative, and in particular their publication on classification and minimum standards,² clearly addresses these issues, and a registration and verification system has been successfully established to look to ensure that affected countries can identify teams that are appropriately trained and equipped.

Reference is made to the unpredictability of disasters as a barrier to investigative study. I would challenge this; the exact timing of disasters may not be predictable, but the fact that they will occur in certain areas, as well as the nature of their consequences, can be predicted. It is imperative that as an academic community, we rise to the challenge of carrying out research in what I do accept are difficult circumstances; the minimum dataset working group of the EMT's initiative³ has taken important steps to facilitate the collection of data from incoming EMT's in order to facilitate analysis of the response and future research.

References

1. World Health Organization. Emergency Medical Teams. WHO Web site. <https://extranet.who.int/emt/page/home>. Accessed May 1, 2017.
2. World Health Organization. Global Health Cluster. Classification and Minimum Standards for Foreign Medical Teams in Sudden Onset Disasters. WHO Web site. http://www.who.int/hac/global_health_cluster/fmt_guidelines_september_2013.pdf. Accessed May 1, 2017.
3. World Health Organization. Minimum Data Set. WHO Web site. <https://extranet.who.int/emt/content/minimum-data-set-mds>. Accessed May 1, 2017.

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We think the writer raises a valid point.

The scoping review¹ focused on medical team's experiences working in disaster settings and most of the articles were written prior to the foreign medical team/FMT guidelines being put in place in 2013. The keywords used for this review were based on the common terminology found in the preliminary search and deemed as sufficient in surveying relevant literature. Our intention was not to ignore the work of the World Health Organization (Geneva, Switzerland) with improving FMTs, and the writer raises a valid point that any follow-up review would benefit by including the additional keyword "foreign medical teams." Further, in future, it would be valuable to review the literature on team's experiences and research after these guidelines have been implemented to understand a potential impact these could have on these teams. We thank the writer for his/her feedback as this will help to strengthen future literature reviews in the subject area.

Reference

1. Oldenburger D, Baumann A, Banfield L. Characteristics of medical teams in disasters. *Prehosp Disaster Med.* 2017;32(2):195-200.