

they are unsafe work environments, at the personal and political level. Mental health interventions were more complex and outcomes less predictable in the conflict setting as compared to natural disasters.

**Conclusions:** Systematic mental health surveillance post-disaster must be included in the general post-disaster assessment. There is a need for supportive education, training of mental health workers, and development of region specific social and psychological questionnaire for validated use in India.

**Keywords:** conflict; India; natural disasters; post-traumatic stress disorder; psychosocial

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### When Helping Hurts: The Effects of Compassion Fatigue on Disaster and Emergency Workers

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**Introduction:** The emotional aspects of traumatic events often are ignored for professionals involved in disaster interventions immediately with victims of emotional trauma. There is a growing body of theoretical and empirical literature that recognizes that engaging in therapeutic work with trauma survivors can and does impact the professionals involved. Compassion fatigue is the latest in an evolving concept that is known in the field of traumatology as *secondary traumatic stress*. Most often, this phenomenon is associated with caring for others in emotional or physical pain.

**Results:** In a literature review, Beaton and Murphy (1995) assert that emergency/first responders and crisis workers absorb the traumatic stress of those they help. By doing so, they are at-risk for compassion fatigue. Among the negative consequences that often are not linked to their work, include substance abuse and relationship conflicts. Although the body of literature exploring the prevalence of compassion fatigue continues to grow, the lack of research to support the underlying theory of the concept in relation to measurement is cause for alarm.

**Conclusions:** This presentation will explore a theoretical model that accounts for and predicts the emergence of compassion stress and compassion fatigue among professionals working with traumatized people as well as explicate the principals associated with accurate diagnosis, assessment, research, treatment, and prevention of compassion fatigue.

**Keywords:** compassion fatigue; disaster; psychosocial; secondary traumatic stress; trauma

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### A Psycho-Educational Intervention Program for Police Officers

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**Introduction:** Recent studies have documented the adverse impacts of disaster exposure for emergency response personnel. Increasingly, researchers and practitioners are focusing on the role of resiliency in reducing the risk of

adverse mental health impacts on first responders. To that end, a novel resiliency-building intervention program was developed and implemented by an external peer-assistance program for a large urban police department. The program includes education and debriefing components and initially was piloted in precincts and now is being implemented at the firing range. A session consists of a team of two peer support officers and a mental health clinician presenting a short psycho-educational program designed to familiarize officers to signs and symptoms of distress and promote effective coping. This is followed by an hour-long small group discussion that gives officers an opportunity to discuss events that have affected them, giving them a better opportunity to mitigate the stressors associated with those events. To assess the feasibility of this approach, a process evaluation of the program was conducted.

**Methods:** Audio-taped, in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 25 program facilitators (14 peers and 11 clinicians). A thematic analysis of the transcripts followed.

**Results:** Participants reported that the program was well received by officers of all ranks. An important aspect of this program was the relative privacy afforded by offering it in a more neutral setting of the firing range as opposed to a precinct. The presence and involvement of their fellow officers was seen as significant in fostering openness and normalizing officers' experiences. Participants also reported that this support mechanism likely would help prepare officers for disasters and other critical incidents.

**Conclusions:** This program is a feasible and relatively inexpensive approach to providing psycho-education to police officers. This model may be effective for other departments.

**Keywords:** peer support; police; process evaluation; psycho-educational intervention; psychosocial; stress

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### Integrating Language, Culture, and Community into Planning for and Providing Effective Emergency Health Care during Disasters: Challenges and Opportunities from the California Experience

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**Introduction:** The experiences of racially/ethnically diverse residents and communities in the US in the wake of the wildfires in California, Hurricane Katrina, and other disasters have shown the serious if not fatal lack of their effective engagement in response to these events, confusion around access to and provision of emergency care, and failure to adhere to recommended services guidance and requirements. As one of the most diverse states in the country, California's experience with earthquakes and wildfires has heightened related concerns around the capacity of health-care providers to effectively meet the needs of diverse communities. The objectives of this study were to: (1) identify barriers and challenges to meeting emergency health needs of these communities during disasters; (2) identify programs and policy gaps in the current environment; and (3) develop recommendations as well as guidance for improvement.