

TERRORISM AND MASS-GATHERING MEDICINE

360

Mass Media and Serious Emergencies

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Visual, audio, and printed news about calamities transmitted by the media often assumes meanings that are unstructured, not only for frail personalities, but for anyone. These media stimuli can evoke the powerful potential of the collective subconscious of primitive dreads, with abnormal reactions which generate emotions and uncontrollable behavior. This is not to burden the suppliers of information with the responsibility of being careful about their message, as most of them are prudent in general and critical of their profession. What, on the contrary, becomes dreadful is the nature of the calamitous events themselves, as their dramatic quality provokes a sort of natural complicity, through unconscious paths, between receiver and supplier of news. This news even can evoke the ancient need for suffering connected to the ancestral self-expiatory search for guilt, a need that always has been impending on all humans since their beginning. This is a sort of witchcraft that ultimately connects media and population: Crocq properly defined it as *misinformatio verae*: mass media are to people an open window on the external world and at the same time the mirror reflecting the secrets of the collective *Ego*.

It is up to the reporters' standards of professionalism and conscience to accomplish the difficult task of selecting the news and the spreading technique, saving of course the people's right to the truth, but also bearing in mind that some of them are passive receivers, with affective-emotional vulnerabilities, which often can be alarming and uncontrollable.

361

Prehospital Management of Mass Violence in South Africa

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Objective: To describe the prehospital management of mass political civilian unrest in South Africa.

Description: Due to political uncertainty in the process of democratization, there exists large-scale intimidation and violence between peoples of different tribal groups, political affiliations, and racial color. Mass-casualty incidents involving conventional and homemade weapons are common in various urban settings. The emergency medical services often are targeted because of treatment provided to the injured. Therefore, unconventional forms of medical management are used when confronted with this scenario, which include armored ambulances, bulletproof clothing, mobile hospitals, ambulance buses, and specially trained medical teams. Specific injuries related to this violence are presented.

363

Stampede Disaster and Management in Hong Kong

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Introduction: This paper describes a recent stampede disaster and presents the management of the disaster in Hong Kong.

Report of Disaster: More than 20 people were killed and 100 injured in an unprecedented stampede disaster at zero hour New Year Day 1993. At the stroke of midnight, a crowd of 20,000 people surged into a popular street for restaurants and bars to count down and cheer the arrival of the New Year. Singing and shouting, with the spraying of beer and champagne, caused some spectators to push and shove each other a few minutes after midnight. That was followed by a chaotic stampede when some tripped and fell. More than 150 police officers were posted in different areas, in anticipation of the problems related to the force of people uncontrollably pushing, piling, and trampling on each other within that brief moment. Casualties and dead bodies were transported to two major general hospitals.

Result: This is the first stampede disaster in the history of Hong Kong. Twenty were reported dead before arrival, mainly by asphyxia from chest and neck injuries. Of the 22 admitted, one died in the hospital. Forty-six were treated and discharged from the emergency department.

Coordinating Management System: The Hong Kong Hospital Authority has developed a special contingency plan in the event of major disaster. Two major regional hospitals acting in a receiving or supporting role are involved with a joint coordinating procedure.

364

The Disaster Within Us: Urban Conflict and Street-Gang Violence in Los Angeles, California

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Violence is reaching critical proportions in cities and suburbs throughout the United States. A particularly alarming segment of this violence involves urban street gangs. This paper examines the impact of street-gang violence in Los Angeles County, California. After examining the growth and patterns of street-gang violence in terms of murder and assaults, it is concluded that modern street-gang violence is a chronic, endemic form of conflict disaster.