

Abstracts of Scientific Papers-WADEM Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine 2017

Helping the Helpers Program

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Study/Objective: Emergency Responders benefit from the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network (MHPSS) for care, so that their well-being and capacity to provide quality care and support to beneficiaries improves; utilizing the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ensuring that persons in-need are identified, and receive initial psychological support.

Background: In the 2014 war, Emergency Responders were exposed to traumatizing events such as working in difficult conditions and evacuating wounded and dead bodies. They dealt with severely wounded including children and women. Sometimes, they had no access to beneficiaries, which was an important source of stress for them. Their facilities were targeted and some responders were wounded or killed. Added to such difficulties, they also face the same problems as the general population does (ie, fear, loss, home destruction, and displacement).

Methods: Capacity building for 32 MoH MHPSS professionals. Coordination with 16 structure/cycles, three cycles/year (hospitals, Civil defense). Providing support group sessions (eight sessions, 12 participants/structure/cycle). Sensitization of Structures' Managers on HH program. Supervision, monitoring, and evaluation. Data collection and analysis.

Results: Three hundred sixty-one Emergency Responders attended two cycles in 2016 with 87% attendance level. 70% were males and 30% females; regarding their occupations, 27% administrative, 21.5% nurses, 19% paramedics, 11.5% doctors, 11% drivers, 5.5% MHPSS professionals, 4.5% firefighters. HADS (hospital anxiety and depression scale). Anxiety: Normal to mild cases increased from 71.5% to 88%, moderate to severe decreased from 29% to 12%. Depression: Normal to mild cases increased from 89.5% to 94%, moderate to severe decreased from 10% to 5%. Qri-Sop Scale (Much and Very much improvement). 68% on self-awareness, 61% on social network, 57.6% on family relations, 61.3% on relation with beneficiaries, and 54% on work environment.

Conclusion: The success of this program relies in its sustainability and the quality of services provided, the ultimate objective is to promote MoH's capacity and ownership of the program.

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Psychological Wellbeing as a Priority throughout the Deployment Cycle

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Study/Objective: Psychological support procedures for deployed Australian Medical Assistance Team (AusMAT) personnel.

Background: Disaster response personnel are deployed into stressful and traumatic situations. Although most organizations recognize staff care as an operational necessity, and psychological well-being can be easily overlooked if not built into a considered set of procedures. AusMAT has consistently applied a system of psychological well-being monitoring throughout the deployment cycle for its deployments to various disasters over recent years.

Methods: AusMAT has engaged Response Psychological Services to develop and facilitate a range of deployment cycle mental health and wellbeing support process. These have included pre-deployment Psychological reviews, deployment counselling and debriefing support, and post-deployment debriefing. Additional services being reviewed for implementation include online well-being checks, peer feedback and psychometrics for selection.

Results: Incorporating mandatory psychological well-being checks and processes as a deployment support procedure have benefited individuals, teams and the AusMAT organization. Individuals benefit from opportunity to review preparation, alignment and readiness to deploy at the crucial pre-deployment period. Individuals and managers can access counselling, debriefing and liaison support confidentially during and after deployment in relation to general issues and crises. The post-deployment process of debrief enhances individual and organizational consolidation of experience, and access to further support where necessary. The direct benefits are augmented by a sense among deployed that AusMAT prioritises their personal and mental well-being with considered and robust support procedures in place.

Conclusion: AusMAT has incorporated psychological well-being support as a deployment standard operating procedure. Further efforts will involve the incorporation of identified digital processes, for enhancing timely monitoring and access to psychological support resources. A broader initiative aims to improve selection, and thereby increase resilience of individuals and teams. The AusMAT psychological wellbeing initiative is established and embraced by deployed. Future enhancements will lever technology to bolster existing procedures.

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Psychological First Aid Training as Public Health Preparedness: Results of a Demonstration Project

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Study/Objective: The project goal is to increase dissemination of trainings in Psychological First Aid (PFA) for health care and public health workers who may become involved in the disaster responses. PFA is a universal early intervention and core preparedness competency for response agencies and widespread PFA training can promote workforce and community resiliency.

Background: A survey of health care organizations found that only 8% had a PFA-specific training policy. Reported barriers included lacking expertise in training content and online course selection appropriate for their staffs, and lacking subject matter experts to help implement face-to-face, interactive practice sessions.

Methods: Program elements include:

- PFA Training Coordinator Guide evaluates 14 online PFA training courses, with recommendations based on each course's audience, skill level, length, and other attributes so a training coordinator can select an appropriate course for their audience.
- Detailed instructions about facilitating interactive sessions so participants can supplement online courses with in-person practice, including 10 different response scenarios (hospital, POD, emergency shelter). Participants rotate through acting as Helper, Client, and Observer.
- Train-the-trainers have been held throughout New York State to equip Training Coordinators to use the guide and facilitate the roleplays, with support available from trained Technical Assistance Providers with a mental health background who can assist with roleplays.

Results: Participants' confidence in practicing PFA was measured after they took an online course, and again after they participated in live practice; average confidence increased by 23.7%. The statistical increase was supported by unanimously positive participant comments such as "I liked the on-line course but being able to have the interactive learning was beneficial."

Conclusion: Results support our belief that strictly didactic training in PFA is less-effective than incorporating practice opportunities. While the project is ongoing, we hope to disseminate early results as a model for building community resilience by encouraging widespread training in Psychological First Aid.

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Victorian Compendium of Community-Based Resilience Building Case Studies

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Study/Objective: The 'Victorian compendium of community-based resilience building case studies' represents an Australian first in compiling a comprehensive resource for promoting resilience building activities to strengthen capacity, should unexpected events occur. A key Compendium tenant enables people to share examples and expertise by explaining how they overcame challenges or discovered unexpected findings.

Background: The Compendium complements several Victorian resilience initiatives. The Rockefeller funded, Resilient Melbourne Strategy incorporates the Compendium to bring together people from across sectors, council boundaries and community groups to deliver a series of distinct, yet connected actions that help make Melbourne a more viable, sustainable, liveable and prosperous city, today and long into the future. Sharing resilience case studies reduces program duplication and saves valuable resources.

Methods: From 2012-2016, community groups received Expressions of Interest (EOIs), requesting presentations about community-based resilience building activity for the 'Advancing Community Resilience Forum'. Each year, fifteen activities were selected for presentation and authors were invited to submit their presentation for consideration into the Compendium, using a standard template. A steering committee selected quality resilience building activities for inclusion into the Compendium.

Results: There were 123 EOIs received and 72 were accepted and invited for presentation. All 72 authors accepted invitations to present and subsequently received another invitation to submit their activity for consideration into the Compendium. Thirty-five accepted; of these, 15 have been accepted for inclusion into the Compendium, 5 are under consideration by the steering committee and 15 authors are preparing for submission.

Conclusion: While projects revealed uniqueness and valuable learnings, authors were often surprised that their projects embodied these qualities. Authors expressed concerns over sharing information, identified challenges when using the Compendium template which resulted in significant modifications. Lastly, authors voiced difficulty reflecting on their challenges and critical factors for success. This model provides an exemplar to replication in other countries.

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The Trauma Signature of 2016 Hurricane Matthew and the Psychosocial Impact on Haiti

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Study/Objective: Examine the mental health and psychosocial dimensions of Hurricane Matthew's impact on Haiti using Trauma Signature (TSIG) analysis.

Background: Hurricane Matthew was the most powerful tropical cyclone of the 2016 Atlantic Basin season, bringing severe impacts to multiple nations including direct landfalls in Cuba, Haiti, Bahamas, and the United States. Haiti experienced the greatest loss of life and population disruption.

Methods: Trauma Signature (TSIG) analysis was used to examine the psychological consequences of Hurricane Matthew in relation to the distinguishing features of this event. TSIG analysis described the exposures of Haitian citizens to the unique constellation of hazards associated with this tropical cyclone. A hazard profile, a matrix of psychological stressors, and a "trauma signature" summary for the affected population