

from four states: (1) New South Wales; (2) Victoria; (3) Western Australia; and (4) Queensland.

Of particular importance was the need for self-sustainability in such an austere environment, and the NSW Fire Brigades were vital in providing essential logistics through their urban search and rescue capability. The task force deployment included 17 tons of medical and logistics equipment on 16 pallets, including pharmaceuticals, generators, lighting, tentage, water and ration packs, completely filling an RAAF 707.

The team performed over 90 surgical operations in total and up to 300 consultations and interventions per day with over 70 in-patients managed at all times. This treatment was undertaken in very difficult conditions with no running water, sterilization, laboratory infrastructure, and only intermittent power through our generator capability deployed with the teams.

The other task force (Charlie Team sent to the Maldives) and public health team (Delta Team sent to Sri Lanka) also were configured in Sydney and were deployed by the CDU on 30 December from the Sydney airport. These teams provided vital public health and primary care support.

In all, 50 personnel were deployed from these four teams (28 from NSW), three additional staff from Canberra Hospital were deployed to Phuket as an assessment team, and two mental health workers were deployed to Jakarta to assist United Nations staff. Many other forensic experts are embedded with the Australian Federal Police in Thailand.

The arrangements and actions will be described.

Keywords: Banda Aceh; conditions; Indonesia; limitations; medical care; planning; preparedness; staff; surgery; task forces; teams; tsunami

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What Types of Patients Were Seen after the Tsunami in Banda Aceh in an International Committee Red Cross (ICRC) Field Hospital Outpatient/Emergency Department?

L. Redwood-Campbell

McMaster University, Canada

Southeast Asian Tsunami—Australian ECHO Team Response

H. Grantham

South Australian Ambulance Service, Australia

The tsunami that occurred following an earthquake in the closing days of 2004 proved to be a disaster on a large scale. The initial information came from the less dramatically damaged areas, while the information from population centers nearest the epicenter was suspiciously absent. As the picture cleared, it became apparent that the northern part of Indonesia had been severely devastated with massive losses of life and injury.

Australia, along with many other nations, sent relief teams to the area. The ECHO Team was the second relief team from Australia and consisted of a plastic surgical reconstructive capability and an infectious diseases capabil-

ity. The 26-member team contributed to the international relief effort in Banda Aceh working with teams from all around the world. A number of useful lessons learned from this experience should be shared with a wider audience.

The scale of the international relief effort presented very significant challenges to prior conceptions of disaster relief based on single nation responses. Logistical and communication issues predictably caused some difficulty. Maintaining effective team welfare and dynamics in an environment that was both physically and psychologically challenging required a considerable conscious effort in terms of leadership.

The clinical challenges included re-establishing routine clinical care, dealing with aspiration pneumonia, providing plastic reconstructive surgery in challenging conditions, and coping with a tetanus outbreak. The logistical issues and the pre-existing medical conditions of the patients hampered all clinical work. The most important lesson demonstrated in the ECHO Team response was the value of accepting cultural differences and managing the situation through the local providers, rather than imposing pre-conceived solutions on an already traumatized community.

A total of 130 reconstructive operations were performed at two sites, approximately 50 medical cases were managed, and a functional hospital, including laboratory and X-ray support was re-established.

One of the most challenging features was ensuring smooth, effective collaboration between local Indonesian personnel and the multitude of International aid providers from around the world.

Keywords: aid; Australia; challenges; collaboration; culture; ECHO Team; Indonesia; international; relief; support; tsunami

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Culturally Sensitive Care in Disaster Areas

O. Ha-Redeye

CMRC, Canada

The medical team provided services to a rural camp of survivors in Aceh, Indonesia after the tsunami. What differentiated the care provided was that the beliefs of the locals were integrated in order to provide culturally sensitive care.

This contrasted starkly with the approach used by many of the other aid groups encountered. This resulted in a more warm reception by locals, who had developed a sense of distrust for other aid groups and their motives. This model of providing care during a disaster, by people respectful of local traditions, is a strategy that should be replicated consistently in the future.

Keywords: acceptance; beliefs; culture; Indonesia; team; traditions; trust

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The Asian Tsunami: Experience on the Indian Coast

Nobs Roy

BARC Hospital, India

Introduction: An earthquake with a magnitude of 8.5 on the Richter scale occurred near Sumatra, 10 kilometers below sea level, triggered a tsunami wave, which traveled at