

Mental Health Aspects of an Intermediate and a Central Disaster: IHBAS Experience

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(On behalf of Project Investigators)

Presentation Outline

- Sharing of research experiences regarding Mental Health Aspects of-
 - An Intermediate Disaster (Fire disaster in an urban slum in Delhi 1999)
 - A Central disaster (Gujarat earthquake, 2001)

- Both were ICMR projects

ICMR project on Mental Health Consequences
and Service Needs of Fire Disaster in an Urban
slum in Delhi
(2000-2002)

IHBAS Team

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Fire Disaster in an Urban Slum: Background

- A devastating fire in the area of Yamuna Pushta slums on 14th March, 1999
- 32 people died and 100 injured
- Most of the affected families lost their entire belongings
- IHBAS multidisciplinary field team provided mental health services
- Idea of research study incepted during the relief work led to the ICMR project started in Aug 2000

Objectives and Research Methods

- A modified cohort design to study the prevalence and pattern of mental health morbidity in affected (exposed) population as compared to unaffected (unexposed) population
- Representative sample- 1251 in the study group and 1265 in the control group
- Two stage assessment- GHQ-12 for screening followed by SCAN based clinical interview for psychiatric diagnosis
- Focus Group Discussion to assess the community perception about mental health service needs of the disaster affected population

Major Findings

- Significantly higher mental health morbidity, as compared to control group
 - Psychiatric disorders (78/1000 v/s 18/1000)
 - Psychological illhealth (232/1000 v/s 50/1000)
- Commonest psychiatric disorders- depression, dysthymia, substance abuse, GAD, somatoform disorder, NO PTSD
- Age and participation in relief work strongest predictors of morbidity (OR 2.07 and 2.00 respectively)

Community Perception about Mental Health Needs: FGD Findings

- Timely and appropriate delivery of adequate relief measures helpful in immediate psychological problems experienced by most of the affected people
- Adequate relief measures along with counselling required to take care of people with short term psychological problems
- Treatment by mental health specialists required for people with severe psychological problems (“those who are not able to regain mental balance even after many months”)

MENTAL HEALTH ASPECTS OF DISASTERS:
A PILOT PHASE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH
NEEDS IN THE EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED
POPULATION IN GUJARAT

Nimesh G. Desai
& Colleagues
& Collaborators

Mental Health Aspects of Earthquake studied in the Pilot Phase

- Emotional States
- Psychological experiences
- Behavioural patterns
- Coping mechanisms
- Psychiatric morbidity & Mental health service needs

Field Methods used in the Study

- Key Informant Interviews
- Semi-structured Interviews
- Free Listing exercises
- Draw a Person Test
- Focus Group discussion
- Participant Observation
- Psychiatric screening instrument and diagnostic interview

Groups Targeted for the Study

- General population
- Relief providers
- Health professionals
- Specific groups- Physically disabled, women, industrial workers, children
- Key Informants- Press people, health administrators, community leaders

Major findings in the Pilot Phase Study

- Evidence for definitive need to focus on the emotional and psychological needs of the affected population
- Communities and populations can and do take care of their emotional and psychological needs with their own resources to a considerable extent
- Three levels of psychological disturbances occurred/expected to occur
 - Mild to moderate transient disturbances of emotions or thoughts (70-90% of population)
 - Moderate to severe psychological disturbances, subsyndromal psychiatric problems, acute stress related disorders (30-50% of population, within few months)
 - Diagnosable psychiatric disorders (5-15% of population, after a few months)

Major findings (Continued...)

- Need for sensitization and training of general physicians and other health care providers
- Minimum sensitization of psychiatrists adequate to enlarge their perspective to larger issues of mental health in community
- Need to focus on emotional experiences and needs of rescue/relief workers and health care providers
- Long term need to continue focus on the mental health service needs of the affected population
- Role of media in timely mobilization of national and international support

ICMR Task Force project on “Mental Health service Needs and Service delivery Models in the disaster Affected Population in Gujarat”

- General Objective to study the mental health morbidity, mental health service needs and various service delivery models for the earthquake affected population in gujarat
- Three sites-Ahmedabad, Bhuj,, and Rajkot
- IHBAS as a Coordinating Center
- Three components-
 - Epidemiological (Community and hospital arms)
 - Secondary data
 - QRM
- Results expected by Sep 2007 at Ahmedabad and Rajkot site, by Sep2008 at Bhuj

THANK YOU