

Establishing Immediate Psychosocial Support Services after Disasters and Critical Incidents: Principles and Significance

L. Weisæth; R Schwrebs

Division of Disaster Psychiatry, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Establishing an information and support service after a disaster or a critical incident is described. The significance of early intervention, appropriate location, and the importance of putting the psychosocial network into action are emphasized. The functions of some of the psychosocial and information services provided for the bereaved families and survivors are described. These functions include:

- 1) To provide direct and authoritative information;
- 2) To establish a meeting place where affected individuals and families can inform and support each other;
- 3) To provide a protective and holding environment where health personnel, clergy, police, and others can do their respective work;
- 4) To establish a base where the police can collect identification data about missing/dead persons;
- 5) To provide a setting for the interrogation work of the police;
- 6) To reduce convergence of people on a disaster site; and
- 7) To provide linkage to local helpers when the assessment indicates that some kind of help or service will be needed over a longer period of time.

The significance of such activity and how it functions as a criterion of quality in the management of disasters and critical incidents in a modern community, is discussed.

Keywords : critical incident; disaster; environment; information; network; identification; linkages; police; psychosocial support; resources, local; support

International Health Support and Disaster Management

Chair: Erik Darre, Colonel, MD (Denmark)

Education in International Health Support

E. Darre

Danish Armed Forces Health Services, Gentofte, Denmark

Introduction: Since the Gulf War in 1991, The Health Services of the Danish Armed Forces has focused more on international missions. The Danish government wants the Defence to be able to fulfill both peace-keeping and humanitarian missions. An International Reaction Brigade with a modern field hospital has been developed.

Objective: The health personnel who staff the medical service on the international missions are civilian doctors and nurses contracted by the Danish Defence and also military medical personnel. The new international focus of Health Services demanded a more comprehensive training to prepare both civilians and military personnel for such missions. A Diploma Course in International Health Support was developed.

Methods: The Diploma Course, approved by the Danish National Health Board, is an eight-and-a-half week course composed of six different course modules:

- 1) Basic training for Civilian Health Personnel;
- 2) Basic traumatology training;
- 3) Advanced traumatology training;
- 4) International politics and medical ethics;
- 5) Tropical medicine and epidemic diseases; and
- 6) Disaster management.

Results and Conclusions: Based on the Danish Diploma Course, the NATO system has agreed on a STANAG (Standardization NATO Agreement) setting up "Training Requirements for International Health Support" in the member countries. Additionally, the Nordic countries recently have developed the "International Support Staff Officers Course", a one-week, common training course for medical personnel embarking on international missions.

E-mail: FSUSLH@Hotmail.com

Keywords : Danish Armed Forces; education; hospital; humanitarian missions; international health support; peace-keeping; Reaction Brigade; training