

CHILDREN IN DISASTERS AND WARS

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Children, Disasters, and Wars

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So far, there has been no strict system of medical service to children in case of large disasters. Many organizations: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Committee of Red Cross; UNICEF; WHO; and others, organize enormous humanitarian, but not medical help to children in disasters and wars. However, children not only need food and medicine, they need the skills of various kinds of pediatric specialists. Personal experience in helping children from different countries and in different situations has shown that the closer the specialized medical help gets to children, and the earlier it is given to them by trained personnel, the better are the results of treatment.

Currently, the most serious task is to establish coordinative contacts between the various state, governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations that provide medical help to children in disasters. Time, money, and children are being lost to delay.

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Impact of Armed Conflicts on Children

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The first objective of this presentation is to analyze the impact of disasters and, more specifically, wars and civil disturbances on the world's child population. During war, 80% of the population most affected are civilians, especially children and women. The impact of wars and armed conflicts on children is diverse, varying from easily detectable casualties, disabilities, and malnutrition, to more complex psycho-social disturbances.

The second objective of the presentation is to illustrate the ways in which the United Nations Children's Fund is responding to the needs of children affected by armed conflicts within the framework of UNICEF's emergency programs.

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Complex Assessment of Health Status of Children's Population Resulting from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power-Plant Accident

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Objective and Methods: This study reports the results of observations of the health status of children exposed following the nuclear power-plant accident.

Results: The status examinations demonstrate negative dynamics in its basic indices. Extension of diseases among children in controlled areas had almost doubled by 1989, and has remained at this level since. The number of healthy children is decreasing (62% in 1987–1988 and 38% in 1992). The number of kids with chronic pathology is growing (9% in 1987 and 28% in 1992).

The most pronounced changes in health indices are observed in certain groups of exposed children. After the accident, the occurrence of a regular pattern of diseases has been observed among children with thyroid doses ≥ 2 Gy. Another significant group includes those children borne by women who were pregnant at the time of the accident. The entire population of children at exposed to the Chernobyl accident is at risk for the development of psychosomatic pathology.

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Children in Zones of Ecological Calamities

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Objectives: One of the regions in which environmental pollution by industrial waste has become an ecological disaster is the Republic of Bashkortostan, the largest oil industrial center in the Commonwealth of Independent States. More than 75% of oil production is concentrated in its capital, Ufa, which naturally predetermines the chemical composition of the anthropogenic outlet into the atmosphere, both its quantitative and qualitative distribution. The problem has become most urgent in pediatrics.

Methods: Studies have examined the health of children in regions with various degrees of atmospheric pollution by oil wastes, specifically their immune and hormonal status.

Results: Correlation of changes between indices of hormonal activity and humoral specific defenses indicate a trend towards an increasing role of peripheral hormones with immune inhibitory effect.

Conclusions: These correlations can be used to examine any group of children in large industrial centers, so as to allow the development of pathogenically grounded recommendations for sanitary measures. They should stimulate further investigations into biomonitoring and its introduction into the practice of ecological expertise of dwelling agglomerations.

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Experience in Assisting Child Victims of the 1988 Armenia Earthquake

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Introduction: During the dramatic 1988 earthquake in Armenia, nearly 25,000 people died and 32,500 were injured. Among these were 3,232 children who experienced the follow-