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GENDER DIFFERENCE IN PARENTAL PSYCHIATRIC MORBIDITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF 2005 SOUTH ASIAN EARTHQUAKE

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Background: The South Asian Earthquake of 2005 had a devastating impact on family lives; almost 76,400 people lost their lives, and thousands more sustained disabling injuries.

Study design: An epidemiological study, to study psychiatric morbidity amongst parents of deceased children, was carried out at Balakot, Pakistan. The area was chosen due to much lesser migration of the original inhabitant to other part of the country. The study was carried out in April-May 2006, six months after the earthquake.

Method: 80% of the eligible population participated in the study. The psychiatric instruments that were used in the study included , Pakistan Anxiety & Depression Questionnaire, Hopkins Symptoms Check list- 25 (Urdu-Version) and Rater administered DSM-IV, PTSD questionnaire (Urdu) for diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The assessment schedules were administered by medical students, trained to administer above instruments and questionnaires.

Results: 133 subjects participated in the study. Participants mean age was 39 years. Amongst the participants, 20% lost their spouse in the earthquake. There was statistically significant difference in the prevalence of probable diagnosis of depression or anxiety disorder between the male and female population as assessed by PADQ ($P < 0.01$). Mean HSCL-25 anxiety and depression sub-scale scores also showed a statistically significant gender difference ($P < 0.01$). 49% met the DSM-IV criteria for diagnoses of PTSD. A higher proportion of female population suffered from PTSD ($P < 0.01$).

Conclusion: The recognition of gender difference in psychiatric morbidity in disaster affected areas has important implications for emergency serviced delivery and long term planning of service provision.