

Two Years Later: Continued Psychological Difficulties of First Responders and the Affected General Population Post-Katrina

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast
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Objectives

- Discuss the various psychological issues of the population affected by Hurricane Katrina that they continue to experience
- Identify several continuing issues experienced by first responders from the hurricane

Faculty

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“Mental Health”

- “How a person thinks, feels, and acts when faced with life’s situations...how people look at themselves, their lives, and other people...evaluate their challenges and problems...and explore choices and includes handling stress, relating to other people, and making appropriate decisions.”
– SAMHSA, 2006

Pre-Katrina

- Mississippi and Louisiana ranked the 2 least-healthy states, based on a combinations of personal behaviors, community environment, health policies, and clinical care to predict health outcomes.
– United Health Foundation, 2005

Katrina Statistics

- COST = estimated \$200 billion
- Approximately 1800 died (900 after levees broke in new orleans)
- 1,000 missing
- 500,000 evacuated
- Area affected = 90,000 square miles (or about the size of great britain)

- “...must have been what Hiroshima looked like....”
- Haley Barbour, Gov. of Mississippi, after viewing the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Mental Health in Recent Disasters

- After 9-11, 12.4% of rescue/recovery workers developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (or 1 in 8 rescue workers)
 - Police = 6.2%
 - Fire Suppression = 12.2%
 - EMS/Disaster Personnel = 11.6%

Oklahoma City

- 12,984 rescue workers and volunteers worked this disaster
 - 2/3 reported handling bodies or body parts
 - 25-30% increase in police divorce rate

Oklahoma City

- 300% increase in fire suppression personnel divorce rate
- 65% of mental health workers developed ptsd-like symptoms

Ptsd in First Responders

- Law Enforcement = 15%
- Fire Suppression Personnel = 10-30%
- Viet Nam Vets = 16%

Mental Health Response Pattern Post-disaster

- 50% of those who developed mental illness symptomology resolve within 1 year
- The majority of those with post-disaster mental illness resolve within 2 years

Mental Illness Response Pattern Post-Katrina

- **First Year**
 - 11.3% reported serious mental illness (vs. 6.1% prior to Katrina)
- **Second Year**
 - PTSD almost doubled (20.9%)
 - Serious Mental Illness = 14.0%

Mental Illness Response Pattern Post-Katrina

- Suicidal Ideation = 6.4 % (from 2.8%)
- Suicidal Plans = 5% (from 1%)
- Mood disorders increased to 33.9%

Primary Factors Of Increase

- 2.5 million people displaced by Katrina and Rita (FEMA, 2006)
- Economic
- Social Structure
- Educational System
- Career/Vocational
- Transportation
- Health Care

Economic Factors

- Loss of job, loss of workplace
- Insurance issues
- Loss of home
- Loss of possessions

Social Factors

- Family systems divided
- Church
- Friends, co-workers
- Transportation
- New surroundings (people, places)
- In parts of coast, sidewalks were replaced 3 weeks ago (Nov. 2007)

Educational Factors

- Gautier, MS Elem. School re-opened on 11-26-07
- 1,100 schools across the Gulf Region closed due to Katrina and Rita
- By Dec. 2006, only 49% of public schools had re-opened in New Orleans
- 74% had re-opened across the Gulf Region

Health Care Factors

- **_ of hospital beds in New Orleans lost, as 7 of the 22 hospitals have closed**
- **More than 4,000 doctors were displaced in 3 LA parishes around New Orleans**

Health Care Factors

- **Death rate in New Orleans increased 47% in first year after Katrina**
- **Number of psychiatric beds down 93% (from 234 pre-Katrina to 17 1 year later)**

Health Care Factors

- **On Gulf Coast, hospital bed availability down**
 - **Hancock Co. hospital down to 62 beds (from 100) due to payer mix problems**

Health Care Factors

- **Gulfport hospital down from 140 beds to 29 beds, and hospital will most likely close within the next few months**
- **Only about 100 of 400 MD's participating in Medicaid prior to hurricane are still participating**

Resiliency

- **Decreased without support systems**
- **Delays and lack of re-building infrastructure**
- **Decreasing availability to resources as time passes (federal and state monies drying up)**
- **Compassion fatigue of nation**

Summary

- **The public mental health system pre-Katrina was not meeting service demands, and is becoming more severely taxed**
- **Integration of primary care + mental health services necessary**

Summary

- Changes needed in regulatory guidelines, example: mental health services
- The impact of Aug. 2005 still not clearly delineated

- “For our future to be strong, all of our communities must be strong. It says in the Bible that where there is injustice in the world, the poorest people, those with the least power, are injured the most.”

- “That was certainly true for the people of Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster compounded by man-made disaster. It is now 18 months past time to get our response right.”
 - House Speaker Nancy Pelosi at the National Press Club, 1.22.07

- “You’re still really dealing with ‘Why are my mommy and daddy not getting to move back into our house?’”
 - Glen East, Superintendent of Schools, Gulfport, MS, 11.25.07

Contact Information

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