

Oral Presentations—Tsunami in South East Asia

Disaster Health: Where is the Information?

Marvin L. Birnbaum,¹ Roderico Ofrin²

1. World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine, Madison, Wisconsin USA
2. World Health Organization South East Asian Regional Office, Delhi, India

Introduction: Access to information concerning the health aspects of disasters has been difficult. This study is part of work defining the health aspects of the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in five countries in the South East Asia Region.

Objective: The objective of this study was to define the location and access to the health data generated relative to these events.

Methods: Information was abstracted from: (1) peer-reviewed literature; (2) non-peer-reviewed publications; (3) governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental agencies; (4) media; and (5) the Internet. Of the 407 articles accessed, 38 were not included as they dealt with the physics of the events.

Results: Of the 369 included articles, 66% were published in journals/magazines that had published only one article relevant to the health aspects of the tsunami; 13%, two; 6% three; 3%, four, 3%, five; 8%, 6–9; and 3% had published <9 articles. Of these, 43 were published in *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 28 in the *International Review of Psychiatry*, 25 in *Science*, 20 in *Nature*, and 15 in *Lancet*. Principal topic areas were psychosocial, public health, infections, relief, and dead body management. Medical care, warning systems, management, food-nutrition, gender issues, veterinary medicine, water sanitation, education, and healthcare systems were the main topics in <8% of the articles.

Conclusions: Health information regarding the earthquake and tsunami is distributed widely, and access requires extensive searches. Much information appeared in non-peer-reviewed sources (gray literature) for which the accuracy cannot be substantiated. There is a need for enhanced methods to catalogue the health information relative to disasters.

Keywords: 2004 tsunami; disaster; earthquake; health; information sources; tsunami

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Barriers to Retrospective Analysis of Health Aspects of the Earthquake and Tsunami of 2004

Patrice A. Kohl,¹ Marvin L. Birnbaum,¹ Roderico Ofrin²

1. WADEM, Madison, Wisconsin USA
2. World Health Organization South East Asian Regional Office, Delhi, India

Introduction: Beginning in 2007, a detailed analysis of the health aspects of the impact of the 2004 earthquake and tsunami on five countries in the South East Asia Region (SEAR) was performed by the WHO-SEARO and the WADEM. This paper examines the barriers encountered while collecting information for this project.

Methods: Researchers used a wide range of sources to collect data for the project and documented the barriers they encountered in the process.

Results: Some of the barriers encountered include:

1. Sources of information were widely scattered;
2. The validity of some of the information could not be substantiated as it appeared in the gray literature;
3. The magnitude of the events differed between each of the countries;
4. Much of the information had been removed from the potential sources;
5. No common structure was used in the reports;
6. No common terminology was used;
7. Each country had a different health structure and baseline pre-event status;
8. Record-keeping was inconsistent;
9. Much information had to be obtained using interviews and identification of knowledgeable informants was difficult;
10. Fitting the information into the Utstein Guidelines was difficult and sometimes ambiguous;
11. Some data and information were withheld or rendered inaccessible for parochial reasons; and
12. No standardized indicators were used including injury/disease descriptors and measures of severity.

Conclusions: Standardized methods, terminology, and structure should be used in future reporting and all such information must be archived and indexed in a common resource center.

Keywords: archives; barriers; information; methods; research; reports; structure; terminology

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Disasters and Remote Islands: Special Challenges Faced in Responding to the 2004 Tsunami

Patrice A. Kohl,¹ Marvin L. Birnbaum,¹ Roderico Ofrin²

1. World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WADEM), Madison, Wisconsin USA
2. World Health Organization South East Asian Regional Office, Delhi, India

Introduction: Disasters can easily paralyze critical services on remote islands and obstruct relief workers trying to reach them with assistance. This paper examines what the 2004 tsunami tells us about the special circumstances disaster management efforts must take into consideration with respect to island communities.

Methods: Researchers working on a tsunami publication for the World Health Organization's South East Asia Regional Office collected data on the impact of the tsunami disaster on islands and relief effort carried out among remote island communities.

Results: Remote islands exhibited several unique vulnerabilities during the disaster. The most prominent related to water scarcity, poor communications, transportation difficulties, and lack of local resources. Prior to the tsunami, most of these remote islands relied on scarce water resources and were difficult to reach due to underdeveloped transportation infrastructure and frequently adverse sea conditions. Tsunami damages resulted in severe water