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Mass Casualty in a Pop Music Concert Instead of Being a Programmed Event: Home Fair 1997, Lima, Peru
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Introduction: On 05 August 1997, the main show of the Home Fair 1997 program was provided by two young Venezuelan singers of tropical music, who were very popular with Peruvian teenagers in that time. As a consequence of bad organization and the fanaticism of the young adolescents, four female teenagers and one male died, and approximately 1,000 people were injured. The open auditorium that has an approximate capacity for 20,000 was filled with 100,000 people. The Assisted Transport of Emergency System and other organizations were responsible for the medical assistance and help facilities for that programmed event.

Purpose: To analyze the conditioning factors for mass casualties at a programmed event, and to formulate recommendations about the management of this kind of events.

Methods: Descriptive methods were used to gather data. The prehospital record sheet for responses by The Assisted Transport System (STAE) was revised. Additional data were obtained from the hospitals to which the victims were referred.

Results: Instead of this event following the path programmed in previous meetings for coordinating actions, on the day of the concert, the situation ran out of control with the tragic result of the deaths of five adolescents. The average age of the victims was 17 years (range: 15–19 years). Four of the victims were women and one was a man. The STAE was in charge of assisted transport and attended a total number of 43 patients, two of them arrived dead to the hospital; 39 were women (90.7%), four (9.3%) were men. The main causes were: multiple contusions, acute respiratory failure, limb trauma, thoracic trauma, and abdominal trauma. The others three deaths occurred within five days after the event. The approximate number of injuries was 1,000, the majority of them as a consequence of the mass pressure against the people who wanted to be closer to their idols. The main cause of death was traumatic asphyxia. There were no case of cranial trauma.

Conclusion: The disaster was imminent many hours before the concert began. The organizers did not want to cancel it despite of the recommendations made by the Health Commission and the STAE. The main pathology was the trauma and traumatic asphyxia, the principal cause of death. We will discuss recommendations to prevent these kinds of problems, and to prevent disasters of this magnitude.

Keywords: asphyxia; crowds; injuries; mass gathering; planning; trauma; traumatic asphyxia