

Disasters and management of dead bodies: The perspective of public health and biosafety

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Natural disasters are complex, unexpected and in general, the severity and magnitude are expressive. They cause impacts translated in material and human losses. There also could be an expansion of the risk through favorable conditions to the spread of diseases. These conditions produce impacts on public health and environment.

Objective: Discuss the risks that the bodies may present.

Methods: Literature review.

Results: The suddenly increase in the number of cadavers may cause fear of the outbreak of diseases, but there is no evidence that it can enlarge the onset of disease risk. However, there are infectious agents that can be present in cadavers such as *M. tuberculosis*, hepatitis B and C, *V. cholera*, HIV, hemorrhagic fever virus and prions, representing risks. Studies show an increase in the incidence of diarrhea and respiratory diseases.

Conclusion: Universal precautions before handling biological material should be followed. Hygiene procedures, care to get sharp devices and the use of protective equipment can reduce the occupational risk. The use of disposable protective wear over the clothing, boots and gloves are recommended. Masks N95 should be used for respiratory protection against aerosolized biological agents. Safety glasses or full face shields should be used for protection against impact of airborne particles, blood and body fluids. All instruments and equipment, including stretchers and transport vehicles must be decontaminated. Corpses do not require disinfection before handling (except in cases of cholera or hemorrhagic fever). It is recommended a vaccination program, to avoid the high risk of infection caused by agents of hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus and tuberculosis. The establishment of a education program is part of the process of preparation and disaster mitigation.

Biography

Telma Abdalla de Oliveira Cardoso, Ph.D. in Public Health, graduated in Veterinary Medicine. She is the coordinator of the Biosafety Office of Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), Ministry of Health, Brazil. Coordinator of the Doctoral and Master Degree in Biosafety of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Rio de Janeiro; of the Post-Graduation Course in Biosafety in Public Health Laboratory in National School of Public Health, Fiocruz. Author/Co-author of more than 90 scientific published papers and more than 20 book chapters. Member of the board of editors of several scientific journals.

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