

PREHOSPITAL and DISASTER MEDICINE

Médecine Pré-Hospitalière et Médecine de Catastrophe

Medicina Prehospitalaria y de Catástrofes

病院にかかるときの処置と
災害医療

Health Aspects of the Tsunami Disaster in Asia

Phuket, Thailand
04 – 06 May 2005

The Official Journal of the
World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine
and the
Nordic Society of Disaster Medicine

Preface

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Abbreviations:

WHO = World Health Organization

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The Earthquake and Tsunami of 26 December 2004 provided a turning point to review what the health and other sectors can do to be prepared and respond effectively in an emergency. The impact was immense and so was the response. In order to learn from each other, review what was done well as well as what could have been done better, it was felt that it would be useful to document these experiences. This special publication is a comprehensive documentation of the deliberations during the World Health Organization (WHO) Conference on the Health Aspects of the Tsunami Disaster held in Phuket, Thailand from 04–06 May 2005. It is a collaborative effort by various units and levels of the Organization. It covers the work of the WHO in the field during the emergency, in partnership with national governments, voluntary organizations, other sectors, non-traditional partners such as the military and private organizations, donors, and the affected communities themselves. Addressing the health needs of the affected population was possible only because of the coordinated efforts of all these partners. This work could not have been done effectively by the health sector alone. It is with the same spirit that the Phuket Meeting was conducted, by bringing everyone together to discuss how we can do better in the future in the areas of assessments, coordination, filling gaps, and capacity building.

The Conference extensively covered various aspects that must be addressed during emergencies. The most important is to further develop national capacities for risk management and vulnerability reduction. These include a suitable and appropriate legal framework, well-trained people across all sectors with a common understanding of concepts in risk reduction, and community partnerships.

These are crucial issues that must be addressed promptly as the next emergency can occur anytime. Further, the role of Member States will continue to be central in taking forward the lessons that are elaborated in this publication. It is the responsibility of the WHO and relevant partners to support countries so that these lessons are incorporated into national and local mechanisms for emergency preparedness and response.

Indeed, strengthening community capacities can reduce vulnerabilities drastically; this will be the constant challenge and approach we have to adopt so that we can translate the lessons learned to make for a safer and healthier world.

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