

In The Name Of God

# Health in Emergencies and Disasters Quarterly

Iranian Virtual Institute For  
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## Editorial

Disasters, either natural or man-made, entail devastating consequences which can have deep and obvious influences or unknown results for humans, their properties and activities.

The injuries caused by disasters sometimes render huge human and financial consequences that affect the whole society. These corollaries freeze the progress of social structure at the event site and leave individuals, families, communities, and societies totally helpless.

Global statistics demonstrate that because of disasters over 3.4 million people have lost their lives and many more have been injured during the two past decades. This has imposed billions dollars to recuperate the financial and human consequences of such grim events. According to data published by Iran's Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), over the last decade (2000-2009), there have been, on average and annually, 387 natural events registered at Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT). They have annually claimed over 5 million lives and 98 billion dollars. A same trend, in terms of frequencies and casualties, had also been observed in 2010 but the financial repercussions outweighed and were 25% higher than the average of the preceding decade. However, one has to note that these results are just a marginal part of total imaginable consequences of disasters and if the true effects, on individuals and societies, are considered, the results will be gargantuan.

Worldwide, Asia is home to over 90% of disaster-stricken people and 50% of human and financial disaster-induced casualties take place in this continent. Iran, considering its geographical and climatic topology, is especially of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. In terms of natural disasters frequencies, Iran has been almost always among the ten first countries globally so that, from 1900 to 2007, there had been 181 striking disasters registered in the country. Generally put, of 40 cases of ever recognized disasters, 31 cases are routine to our country. Without any overestimation, natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches etc. and unnatural ones such as traffic accidents, plane crashes etc. are happening on a daily basis in Iran. Over 93% of Iran's territory is prone to risk (average to high) of seismic activities and there is almost a big

shocking earthquake happening every other year. In overall, Seismic jolts have taken the lives of over 180000 Iranian people during the past 90 years. Bam's case in 2003 is one of the most startling and tragic ones in Iran's history that claimed over 30000 lives and toppled the city to ashes. As Iran is a so called disaster-prone country sitting on the belt of earthquake trembles such gloomy events are, inevitably, looming.

Health sector, on the other hand, has an important and essential role in reduction and relief of disaster related sufferings and casualties. The major and prime demand of people in time of disasters is also related to health. Therefore, a consistent, integrated, continual, available, and cooperated delivery of health care is of salient importance at these situations.

Learnt-lessons and experiences of previous events and disasters, in Iran and worldwide, have shown that although governmental and non-governmental institutions have sufficient and necessary capacity and preparation for on time action in disasters, they, due to various factors, feel frustrated and entrapped when exposed to real disasters. Lack of local and reliable knowledge for education of people and professionals, and lack of scientific management of disasters are of the reasons for such a sense of inability.

Therefore, preparing the health sector for creation of a safe milieu for health care providers and users, and provision of the most services for the most people, is of the main concerns of this journal. Indeed, of prime principles for promotion of health sector preparation at national and international levels is to conduct scientific studies to investigate the capacities, experiences, limitations, and vulnerabilities when exposing to disasters. This finally can lead to production of local and hands-on knowledge. The present journal, as the first of its kind on health preparedness and medical emergency issues, sets to invite scientists and researchers from various disciplines over and publish and disseminate the latest national and international findings in disaster research. This way the journal sets the ground for evidence-based decision making and all-out advancement in this fast growing branch of science.

**Hamid Reza Khankeh, PhD**  
**Editor in Chief**