

DISASTER AND CRISIS

PREPAREDNESS, MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE



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NURTURING THE NEEDED: CANCER AND NATURAL DISASTERS

Dr. Dhanya C. R.:

Asst. Professor, Department of Biochemistry, Government College, Kariavattom,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Dr. Anjana J.

Asst. Professor, Department of English, NSS College, Pandalam, Pathanamthitta, Kerala

Introduction

“We cannot stop natural disasters but we can arm ourselves with knowledge: so many lives wouldn't have to be lost if there was enough disaster preparedness”.

Cancer has emerged as the most wide spreading disease of the world in recent times. The global cancer burden was estimated to have risen to 18.1 million new cases and 9.6 million deaths in 2018. The increase in the regional burden of cancer is largely a result of socioeconomic growth and the increasing size and aging of the population (Roselle De Guzman 2019).

Natural disasters have become frequent phenomena. In such unprecedented situations, the special needs of people with non-communicable diseases including cancer are largely over looked. Cancer patients become an extremely vulnerable group in the midst of the din and bustle of natural disasters. Mostly medical care for disaster-affected population is based on the management of trauma and acute infections. With the increasing number of cancer cases, special attention should be given to the awareness and rehabilitation of cancer patients in the disaster affected areas. There are essentially two factors concerning cancer in association with natural disasters- Cancer risk and Cancer care.

Disasters and cancer risk

Studies have evidenced an association between natural disasters and cancer. Volcanic activity has shown to be a possible risk factor for thyroid cancer. Several studies analyzed the incidence of thyroid cancer among people living in the volcanic areas of Iceland (Hrafnkelsson 1989), Hawaii (Kolonel 1990), New Caledonia (Truong 2007) and French Polynesia (Curado 2007).

The geologic processes of volcanism produce various elements and metals in abnormal concentrations. For example, for decades, Mount Etna has been continuously delivering suspended particulate matter and gases like sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen fluoride, hydrogen sulfide, hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, ammonium sulfate, helium, radon and many of these

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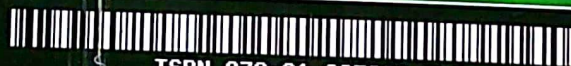
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