Examining Long-Term Community Recovery to Identify Opportunities for Improved Education and Training: Sandy and Irene

Lauren Walsh, MPH,
Laurie Chow, MA, MPH

Flexibility in Disaster Research

The study originally included only communities affected by Hurricane Irene. On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall, impacting many of the same communities as Irene. Researchers could not go into communities so recently hit by Sandy and ask questions about recovering from Irene. The timing of events illustrated the challenges inherent in planning for disaster research protocols, the need for a streamlined approval process, and flexibility on the part of disaster research teams.

Timeline of Irene and Sandy-related Events

Preliminary findings (Irene Sites)

- Most commonly needed trainings
  1. Public health principles
  2. Recovery, short- and long-term
  3. Legal principles
  4. Clinical management
  5. Surge capacity
- Most respondents indicated the community was in the long-term stage of recovery
  - Some variation was observed
- Further results pending
  - Site 1, 10.5 cm
  - Site 2, 10.2 cm

Conclusion

As the discipline of disaster health develops, we will move towards a more structured approach to educating and training those who are likely to be involved in the recovery of disaster-impacted localities.

A better understanding of the lived experience of health professionals in leadership roles during and after large-scale events can help educators tailor curriculum to meet the needs of the user and allow them to operate in a unified and collaborative manner.

Mixed Methods Study Design

- 5 case study locations; 2 Irene, 3 Sandy
- Semi-structured interviews conducted with the following professionals:
  - Incident commander
  - Emergency manager
  - Public health director
  - Mental health director
  - Hospital emergency operations leader
  - Chiefs of fire and police
  - Local political leaders (e.g., mayors)
  - Leaders of active humanitarian organizations
  - Other active leaders in the recovery process
- Data were analyzed using NVivo 10 software

References:

4. Aerial photo of Sandy Damaged Community © Andreas Boecher / FEMA

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2013 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Exposition, Boston, Massachusetts