

The Necessity of Field Hospitals for Effective Disaster Management

The inevitability of natural disasters and the frequent occurrence of human-made disasters necessitate well-planned effective emergency management approaches that employ functional and cost-efficient methods. Since disasters entail multiple financial losses, property damage, and most importantly, impose a significant threat to human health and life, medical preparedness constitutes a pivotal part of the disaster management process. Field hospitals are an effective way of meeting emergency requirements by means of fast, accessible, and self-sufficient mobile medical services. Despite minor disadvantages, field hospitals should be utilized as an obligatory element of emergency preparedness.

The effectiveness of field hospitals in the time of emergency is validated by the features of these mobile medical units. As the definition implies, a field hospital is “a mobile, self-contained, self-sufficient healthcare facility capable of rapid deployment and expansion or contraction to meet the emergency requirement for a specified period of time” (Naor & Bernardes, 2016, p. 4). In most cases of disasters, both natural and human-made, time is the most crucial asset. The ability to respond quickly and competently guarantees that lives will be saved and the adverse consequences of the emergency will be eliminated or averted. As stated by Naor and Bernardes (2016), in “scenarios of uncertainty and dynamism, the availability of emergency medical care in the aftermath is critical” (p. 3). Thus, since field hospitals are capable of providing immediate help for the populations impacted by a disaster, the appropriateness of such health care facilities is justifiable.

Moreover, another reason why field hospitals should be utilized within disaster management is in their self-sufficiency. Indeed, disaster might occur in a disruptive and large-scale manner destroying hospitals or obstructing the ability to access them (Bakowski, 2016). In that case, a properly equipped and ready for fast deployment mobile facility is capable of meeting the demands of the emergency. The various options of constructing

mobile hospitals according to the forecasted demands allow for substituting critically important care that is conventionally provided at a traditional hospital (Bakowski, 2016). Thus, since mobile facilities might be adjusted specifically to the emergency demands during the preparation period, they are an effective tool in disaster management.

Logistical flexibility associated with field hospitals is another aspect that justifies their applicability and effectiveness. It is commonly discussed that the selection of the sites and specific hospitals that will be assigned for emergency response is a difficult and logistically challenging issue (Moradian et al., 2016; Naor & Bernardes, 2016). Indeed, since it is impossible to predict where the disaster will occur, logistical location-related choices are approximate. However, with field hospitals, the logistical difficulties might be resolved due to the mobile features of these facilities (Bakowski, 2016). When planning for emergency response, the teams are not challenged with the validation of the location of a hospital. Instead, they are capable of investing time, efforts, and costs into the equipping of mobile hospitals and training of personnel. Ultimately, these contributions will facilitate the overall success of disaster response operations.

Despite the multiple advantages of the utilization of field hospitals within the framework of disaster preparedness, there are opponents of such measures. They claim that the facilitation of field hospitals is rather costly and involves avoidable expenses that might be spent on more important disaster management-related processes (Moradian et al., 2016). Indeed, technological features of such an approach to health care delivery during the process of disaster management involve additional expenses that would not be required without the implementation of a field hospital project. Moreover, some claim that due to the limited functionality and insufficient scope of capabilities provided by field hospitals, their exploitation is not adequate in a disaster situation (Bakowski, 2016). It is assumed that due to

the mobile features of the facilities, they will not be physically capable of containing all essential tools, equipment, and medication.

These opposing views might be refuted by appealing to the long-term cost-efficiency and validated the functionality of field hospitals in world practice. Indeed, as demonstrated by the cases of field hospital utilization, since the accessibility of traditional health care facilities is often disrupted, field hospitals are capable of saving lives even using the limited scope of services (Naor & Bernardes, 2016). Moreover, when shifting the funding efforts toward mobile facilities instead of logistical hospital location-related interventions, the disaster management plans will win in the long run due to the increased number of saved lives.

Conclusively, field hospitals as functional, accessible, and self-contained mobile health care facility is an important component of an effective disaster management plan regardless of the type of emergency. Firstly, mobile facilities guarantee timely reaction; secondly, they are beneficial if the physical facilities are inaccessible or destroyed; thirdly, it eliminates the logistical complications related to the choice of location for emergency medical assistance. Some opponents claim that mobile medical facilities are not cost-efficient and are limited in functionality. However, it is validated that field hospitals facilitate the level of readiness to respond to emergencies and positively contribute to the overall effectiveness and success in mitigating the consequences of disasters.

References

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