Psychologists Work in the Portuguese Emergency Medical Team (PT EMT): Best Practices in Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Deployments

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Background/Introduction: The role of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in EMTs is crucial, especially during emergencies and disasters, which elevate mental health risks. According to the WHO, timely MHPSS interventions can reduce these risks, promote recovery, and enhance resilience. In the PT EMT, psychologists support the EMT team's stability and functionality and intervene with patients or affected populations as needed. Their interventions include managing complex emotional situations, providing psychoeducation, and assisting in grief processes and referrals.
Objectives: Reflect on the importance of MHPSS in EMT deployments, analyzing psychologists' interventions and key lessons learnt.
Method/Description: Integrative literature review and PT EMT cases study.
Results/Outcomes: The literature review emphasizes the importance of early psychological intervention during disasters, outbreaks, and complex emergencies. In PT EMT's experience, nine psychologists, trained through the Disaster Response Core Training Course, have been deployed in seven missions. Their work highlights the need for psychologists in EMT deployments to ensure team well-being and effective patient care.

Considering this, a clinical guide for psychological intervention in disaster situations is being developed. INEM's Psychologists are also advancing psychological first aid training for health professionals and providing advanced training for psychologists in emergency intervention. This initiative was vital during events such as World Youth Day 2023, a mass gathering event.
Conclusion: The experience in the PT EMT, allow us to recommend the Psychologists' enrolment in the EMT deployments. This inclusion has shown significant benefits, reinforcing the need for ongoing training and the development of best practices for psychological support in disaster response.

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Standards Development for Complex Humanitarian Settings: The Use of an Interregional Field Exercise (IFX) Program to Drive Minimum Operational Standards Development for Rapid Response Mobile Laboratories (RRML)

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Background/Introduction: RRMLs provide critical laboratory diagnostic support in crisis situations and are an important asset of the global health emergency workforce as part of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) global strategic group for Diagnostic Surge Capacities (DiSC). Minimum Operational Standards and a Typology (MOST) for RRMLs were designed to provide rapid and quality operational response tailored to the needs of affected communities, and to integrate RRMLs into existing coordination and response structures in emergencies.
Objectives: An Interregional Field Simulation Exercise (IFX) Program was launched to assess applicability, feasibility, and comprehensiveness of MOST standards. The program also aimed to define recommendations aimed at strengthening coordination and interoperability of RRMLs with a wide range of operational partners.
Method/Description: Expanding upon an initial table-top exercise in Germany (May 2023), two full-scale field exercises of increasing complexity were conducted in Türkiye (June 2023) and Georgia (February 2024) uniting over 200 partners from all WHO regions. This collaborative effort has informed the finalization of the MOST, the update of the RRML typology.
Results/Outcomes: As a result of the IFX implementation a comprehensive and applicable set of standards was agreed and endorsed by the RRML community of practice, supporting both a quality response and seamless integration of RRMLs into operations of the global health emergency corps.
Conclusion: This study underlines the benefit of field simulation exercises for the development of standards aimed at strengthening quality response, interoperability, and coordination in complex humanitarian settings through testing them in realistic and safe environment by a wide range of operational partners.

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Ready, Set, Deploy: AUSMAT's Surgical Cache Gets a Makeover

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Background/Introduction: The Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT), a Type 2 Emergency Medical Team launched a project to ensure its surgical cache remains perpetually deployment ready for response to sudden-onset disasters and other health emergencies.
Objectives: The objectives of this project included: inventory accuracy, compliance with standards, expiry date management, procurement and replenishment, functionality and condition, quality assurance, education and training, workforce review and budget compliance.
Method/Description: Two AUSMAT perioperative specialist nurses for a period of 8 months were appointed to critically audit the surgical cache through all phases of the perioperative