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Disasters: Reflects from a few in reality

Antony J W Taylor

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

By definition disasters are catastrophic large-scale events that are beyond the ability of communities to cope, without substantial assistance from organized agencies outside. Long before the latter became established nationally and internationally, explanations were sought in the realm of mythology, superstition and religion for the errant behavior that might have caused them. Then appropriate remedies were devised to try to restore the status quo. Today, while such procedures might occasionally still coincide with relief in relation to natural disasters, they fall far short in relation to those of either a technological or a human kind. The contretemps is raised here in connection with a few disasters with which the presenter was involved, together with the faltering steps he took to bridge the explanatory gaps. The discourse embraces an interdisciplinary conceptual model, permeates epistemological boundaries, raises questions of clinical/cross-cultural/social practice, and appeals for independent validation. If substantiated, it would carry implications for the training of practitioners, researchers, and their teachers.

Tony.Taylor@vuw.ac.nz

Beta-blockade after traumatic brain injury: Overall outcome, long-term functional outcome and post-traumatic depression

Shahin Mohseni

Orebro University Hospital, Sweden

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is among the leading causes of disability and death following trauma, and is increasing, especially among the elderly. Studies from our institution have shown promising results with decreased in-hospital mortality in TBI patients exposed to β -blockers. The timing of initiation of such treatment has been debated, our data indicates increased survival rates among patients receiving early β -blockade treatment after their traumatic injury. These positive findings have been attributed to the potential protecting effects offered by β -blockers against the TBI associated hyperadrenergic state. Long-term functional outcome is another aspect of β -blocker treatment that is of importance, which our research team has investigated. Finally, depression and anxiety are estimated to occur in approximately half of all trauma patients and can lead to impaired rehabilitation potential and quality of life. It has been hypothesised that beta-adrenergic receptor activation may play an important part in the initial formation of traumatic memories. Studies therefore suggest that there is a potential therapeutic role of beta-blockade in the context of trauma management and the prevention of debilitating states such as depression and anxiety conditions. Several ongoing studies have been undertaken at our institution to better assess this association in patients suffering from TBI.

mohsenishahin@yahoo.com