






INTEROPERABILITY

Joint Operation among EMT, FETP and PHRRT during Noto Earthquake Japan 2024

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Background/Introduction: The 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake highlighted the challenges of maintaining effective Early Warning, Alert, and Response Systems (EWARS) during emergencies and disasters. Key issues include damaged reporting capacities of local health facilities, the need to collect data from temporary facilities such as evacuation centers, analyzing data under emergency conditions and implementing on-site infection prevention and control measures.

Objectives: This report reviews the successful joint operation of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT), Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETP), and Public Health Rapid Response Teams (PHRRT) during the earthquake.

Method/Description: Findings were consolidated by joint after-action review.

Results/Outcomes: National EMTs such as Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) reported data on infectious diseases to the EMT Coordination Cell (EMTCC) using the J-SPEED system, which is compatible with the WHO EMT Minimum Data Set (MDS). The robust logistics capacity of EMTs allowed effective data collection from remote and ad hoc facilities. The J-SPEED Analysis Support Team at the EMTCC shared this data with the FETP. Experts from FETP analyzed the data, identifying cases requiring intervention and successfully triggered targeted infection prevention and control measures implemented by PHRRTs specifically Disaster Infection Control Team (DICT).

Conclusion: The joint operation demonstrated that EMTs can effectively function as ad hoc sentinels within national EWARS. The integration of EMT data with FETP analysis and targeted interventions by PHRRTs proved successful, offering a valuable model for future emergency responses globally.

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Enhancing Mass-Casualty Preparedness: Inter-Agency Collaboration in an Airport Emergency Response Exercise

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Background/Introduction: In February 2024, the Philippine Emergency Medical Assistance Team (PEMAT), specializing in mass casualty incidents and rapid medical response, actively engaged in a comprehensive emergency preparedness exercise at Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport (DZR).

Objectives: Along with various response teams, this simulation assesses PEMAT's management and capacity-building skills, with specific emphasis on the team's efficiency in organizing emergency medical response, triage, treatment, and collaboration.

Method/Description: Before the simulation, PEMAT conducted a mass casualty management orientation and tabletop exercises for all participating teams. The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) was in charge of evaluating the drill's overall organization, communication, and rapid execution. During the drill, PEMAT oversaw triage and treatment operations from an advanced medical station, encompassing a variety of realistic scenarios.

Results/Outcomes: As a result, PEMAT established a legal framework for collaboration among emergency response teams in Tacloban, thereby fostering an unstructured approach to disaster response. PEMAT demonstrated its capacity to manage mass casualty incidents by showcasing its abilities in assessment, intervention, and management. The simulation revealed that the respondents displayed a strong knowledge base. However, this emphasized the importance of continuous training and refining skills, especially in managing mass casualties, to achieve the optimal level of preparedness.

Conclusion: The simulation revealed useful insights for enhancing resource allocation and communication protocols in high-pressure scenarios. In conclusion, the PEMAT exercise underscored the vital necessity of continuous training and skill development to guarantee effective disaster response. By incorporating these insights into future training, emergency responders can further improve their readiness and coordination during mass casualty incidents.

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Strengthening Disaster Response Preparedness: Evaluating IPC Measures and Interoperability of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT), Rapid Response Mobile Laboratories (RRML), and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Teams in a Simulated Earthquake with Situation-Related Cholera Outbreak Scenario

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Background/Introduction: In May 2024, German EMTs ASB, Cadus, Humedica and Johanniter conducted a joint disaster response field exercise including a Cholera outbreak scenario. The RRML CIBU (Cellule d'Intervention Biologique d'Urgence) from Institut Pasteur, France, embedded in an EMT, supported the exercise. Amateur actors presented injuries and cases of acute watery diarrhea with different levels of severity. Dummy samples were collected and transported to the RRML for analysis. An external IPC-Team from the German Robert Koch Institute conducted facility assessments to provide Cholera-specific IPC advice and training.

Objectives: To assess

1. the implementation of Cholera-specific IPC measures.
2. the need for and benefit of external IPC support.
3. the interoperability between EMTs and RRML.

Method/Description: Qualitative evaluation through observation and interviews.

Results/Outcomes: All EMTs (n=4) had access to IPC guidelines and personal protective equipment (PPE) and implemented active screening for signs of infection (n=4). 75% (n=3) of the EMTs actively isolated suspected cholera cases. EMTs underlined the benefit of external IPC support (n=3) and training provided (n=4). 48 EMT staff were trained in donning/doffing of PPE and management of spill events. The RRML provided transport material and training on packaging of samples. Occasional contamination of the outer packaging and incorrectly filled-in lab forms were reported. Sample transport was aligned to lab schedule.

Conclusion: The EMTs adapted competently to the Cholera scenario. Interoperability with the RRML was satisfying. The IPC team was seen as important support. Lessons learned included the need for improved isolation precautions, packaging of samples and completion of lab forms.

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GOARN Strategic Group for Diagnostic Surge Capacities (GOARN DiSC) – A Home for Rapid Response Mobile Laboratories and Forum for Strengthening Coordination and Interoperability with Emergency Medical Teams

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Background/Introduction: Rapid Response Mobile Laboratories (RRMLs) are essential for providing timely

diagnostics support to affected populations in crisis situations. Recognizing their critical role, the WHO Regional Office for Europe initiated the RRML Initiative in 2018, driven by European partner institutions of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN).

Objectives: To enhance coordination and interoperability with the Global Health Emergency Corps (GHEC) partners, the RRML initiative transitioned to a global level in 2024, led by the GOARN Strategic Group for Diagnostic Surge Capacities (DiSC). This transition aimed to establish common standards for RRMLs and develop strategies to deliver quality and predictable diagnostic services to affected populations.

Method/Description: The DiSC group focused on defining operational standards for RRMLs, outlining future strategic directions, and creating operational plans. Additionally, the group sought to strengthen collaboration between RRMLs and Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) by serving as a platform for sharing best practices and information exchange.


Results/Outcomes: The DiSC established a clear leadership structure and coordination mechanisms to facilitate collaboration with GHEC partners (including EMTs), underpinned by standardized operating procedures and workforce development initiatives, including an RRML recognition system. To enhance information sharing and operational efficiency, DiSC integrated its capabilities into the Knowledge and Information Management in Emergency Platform (KIMEP), a digital tool designed for streamlining coordination in the field.

Conclusion: By establishing the DiSC structure under GOARN leadership and leveraging the KIMEP platform, the RRML initiative has significantly improved information exchange, coordination, and interoperability with EMTs partners throughout the emergency management lifecycle.

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Enhancing Civil-Military Collaboration in Poland for Streamlined EMT Development and Deployment

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Background/Introduction: Integrating military and civilian capabilities in emergency medical teams (EMTs) is underexplored in Poland. Enhanced coordination between these sectors can significantly improve EMT development and deployment, aligning with international guidelines and adapting to Poland's specific context.

Objectives: The primary objectives are to develop policies for seamless civil-military collaboration in EMT operations, establish universally recognized and locally relevant standards, enhance EMT capabilities through joint training programs, implement rapid mobilization and effective coordination strategies, and create interoperable systems for coordination between EMTs and other rapid response capacities.

Method/Description: This study employs a multi-faceted approach, including developing joint protocols and communication channels for civil-military coordination, aligning with WHO guidelines while adapting to local needs. It establishes