


MEETING ABSTRACTS**Rehabilitation in EMTs: AUSMAT COVID-19****Deployments**

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Background/Introduction: The WHO has recommended the inclusion of rehabilitation capabilities in EMTs responding to disasters and health emergencies since 2013. Likewise, the importance of rehabilitation input across the continuum of care for patients experiencing COVID-19 illness has been highlighted since the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite recognition of the role and value of rehabilitation, both in EMTs and the management of COVID-19, evidence that EMTs activated in response to COVID-19 have deployed rehabilitation professionals remains limited.

Objectives: This paper will describe the experiences of the Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) in deploying rehabilitation professionals as an integrated capability of multi-disciplinary EMTs responding to COVID-19 health emergencies.

Method/Description: In response to COVID-19 emergencies in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Timor-Leste, and the Solomon

Islands, AUSMAT deployed rehabilitation professionals alongside multi-disciplinary EMTs on four occasions in 2021-2022. The rehabilitation professionals engaged in direct clinical care and capacity-building activities.

Results/Outcomes: The work of the deployed AUSMAT rehabilitation professionals facilitated important capacity building and support for local rehabilitation staff and services, enhanced the time critical multi-disciplinary training of local nursing and medical staff, and improved the quality of clinical care of COVID-19 patients.

Conclusion: AUSMAT's experience has demonstrated that the deployment of rehabilitation professionals as part of a multi-disciplinary team adds significant value to the work of EMTs responding to COVID-19 health emergencies. Nursing and medical staff cannot readily replicate the knowledge, skills, and perspectives of rehabilitation professionals. Appropriately skilled rehabilitation professionals should be deployed to support national rehabilitation staff when EMTs respond to health emergencies.

Prehosp Disaster Med. 2022;37(Suppl. 2):s83.

doi:[10.1017/S1049023X22001820](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X22001820)