

Summary, EUNAD course 22 september 2017

Ask Elklit

Ask Elklit presented the Danish National Centre for Psychotraumatology, the EUNAD project and the goal of the day – to learn more about physical disability in a crisis and to create guidelines for helping the physically disabled. Hereafter, he held a presentation about the psychological mechanisms in trauma reactions. This presentation covered the criteria for ASD, PTSD and complex PTSD, trauma types, the consolidation of traumatic events, the initial trauma responses in the situation and the weeks following an event as well as the long-term consequences of trauma and comorbidity. Besides, it covered the prevalence for PTSD and exposure to trauma in general, individual vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms, gender and age differences. All through the presentation, the importance of the individual perception of a traumatic situation was stressed.

Susanne Olsen

Susanne Olsen, National President for The Danish Association of the Physically Disabled, presented the specific challenges of physically disabled individuals face in a crisis. She explained that even if it is not something individuals think about in everyday life, there are more dangers to be considerate of as an individual with a disability. Most try to accept it as a part of life and not let fear be another limitation. She spoke of the responsibility of having helpers be your functioning limbs and possibly putting them in danger too, and about making plans with family and friends in case of crisis. She shared her personal experiences with telling carers and family members to save themselves if need be. Besides these psychological aspects, she talked about designing buildings for disabled and making evacuation easy for physically disabled individuals. The organization designed their facilities accordingly, making sure elevators could be used during a lock-down and isolating and fireproofing the elevator shafts. Seeing that this was possible, it is her hope that others will start constructing similar buildings.

Adnan Todorovac & Louise Simonsen

Adnan Todorovac and Louise Simonsen, volunteering interns at the Danish National Centre for Psychotraumatology, presented the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EUNAD project and findings from the EUNAD study on physically disabled individuals in crisis situations. These findings included the problems in a crisis, reactions during the crisis and the

problems in untrained or uninformed rescuers and health personnel. The problems in a crisis included an absence of guidelines, avoidance of thinking about or preparing for a crisis and the diversity of needs among disabled individuals. Besides, many test evacuations did not take disabled individuals into account. The reactions during a crisis varied from freezing to actively engaging in problem solving, just as the reactions following a crisis varied in the individuals. Besides, it was stressed that communication and information with and for the disabled individual is of great importance. In general, the individuals did not seek psychological counselling, but depended on conversations with other disabled individuals instead.

Carsten Fladmose Madsen

Carsten Fladmose Madsen, chief physician at the orthopedic surgery department of Odense University Hospital, held a presentation regarding the immediate treatment of physically disabled in disasters with few or many victims. The presentation included treatment of physically disabled compared to the treatment of non-disabled individuals, what to be aware of regarding special needs of disabled individuals and how to develop the required understanding and awareness in health personnel. The specific vulnerabilities and worries among disabled patients were described, as were the key tools for professionals to provide medical and supportive help. He emphasised the importance of listening to the disabled individual and making a treatment plan in cooperation as well as the importance of listening to and informing relatives. In disasters or accidents with many victims, there is a triage based on who needs help the most, and other victims risk feeling abandoned. Furthermore, there is an assessment of how to help more people with less resources, and that may have negative consequences for physically disabled individuals. The assessment, however, is not based on physical appearance and ability.

Ellen Madsen

Ellen Madsen, physiotherapist at the Special Hospital for Polio and Accident Patients, held a presentation regarding the specialised rehabilitation of patients with disabilities after an accident or a disaster. The presentation included a description of the hospital, its patients and the treatments offered. The health personnel consist of several different kinds of professionals, including psychologists, doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and social workers. The treatment is not immediately after the incident, but a transition from medical care to rehabilitation and living in their own home. Besides rehabilitation, the personnel assist in compensating for lost function,

adjustment and accept of the new form of life the traumatic incident has caused. The cooperation with the patient as well as the relatives was emphasised. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a meaningful, autonomous life with the highest possible quality of life.

Mariann Krogh

Mariann Krogh, psychologist and mother of a physically disabled individual, held a presentation regarding the psychological aspects of accidents with disabled individuals and involvement of relatives. The presentation was based on personal experiences of being the parent of a disabled individual and covered the many losses, both in functioning and socially, disability creates. She shared her experiences of her home being a work place for her daughter's carers and the impact of knowing that your child would most likely be left behind in a crisis. She described the ongoing conflicts with schools and facilities about accessibility and integration in a classroom environment, and shared her experiences of being confronted with people considering her daughter worth less than other individuals. In case of a crisis, she considers both her daughter and herself helpless, since she does not believe herself able to leave her daughter to save her own life.

Recommendations

The participants discussed what guidelines could be recommended for thirty minutes and were asked to present 3 recommendations per discussion group.

These recommendations were:

- Requiring by law that new buildings implement the possibility of evacuation of disabled – including check-ups to ensure that the requirements are met
- That every work place in the public sector has a responsibility towards disabled employees and, as far as possible, make individual evacuation plans
- That the medicine card accessible to all Danish hospitals include a description of disabilities
- Implementing first aid and fire rehearsal evacuations in elementary school that includes how to handle the most common disabilities
- Public events attempting to make disabilities more seen and acknowledged
- Easier access to psychological counselling for individuals with disabilities and their relatives
- Involving the disabled individuals more in treatments, rights and plans
- Plans for evacuations with more focus on disability facilities

- Education for elementary school children regarding disabilities
- QR codes for mailboxes, elevators and ID cards that first responders can scan to ensure better treatment
- Specifically assigned persons to communicate with the patients and be aware of special needs
- The disabled themselves and society in general being more aware and informed, perhaps via media exposure