

"Dealing with tough situations" – the experiences of moral challenges among disaster responders

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How are moral challenges among disaster responders perceived and dealt with?

- Healthcare responders reported that moral challenges are predominant in disaster settings and affected wellbeing both during and after the response.
- This depended on the severity, the repetitive encounter and the duration of the morally challenging situation.
- Further they reported that it was up to the individual to find constructive solutions and support to manage encountered moral challenges.
- If left without support or not able to resolve the situation it led to consequences such as moral distress and affected wellbeing.

Method

Four focus group discussions were conducted in spring 2018 with 12 Swedish nurses and doctors from Médecins sans Frontières, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and the Swedish Red Cross. Thematic analysis resulted in four themes that influenced handling moral challenges during and after response: "tools and support", "perception of professional role and engagement", "other stress factors" and "type of situation".

Aim

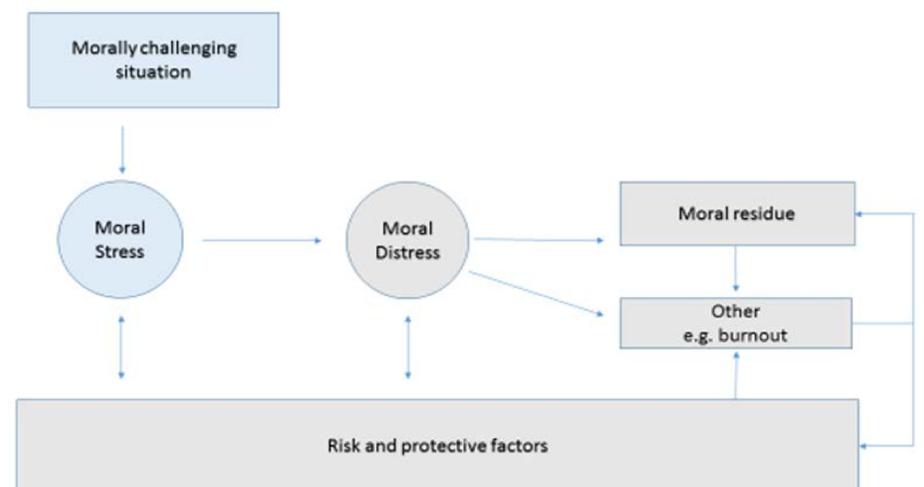
This study explored how moral challenges are perceived and dealt with, and possibly influence wellbeing among disaster responders when working within international disaster response over the last five years.

Conclusion

The preliminary findings recommend that disaster responders need to be both professionally and personally better prepared for managing moral challenges. Furthermore, formal support from the organizations needs to be appropriate to the needs and available during the response, as well as after.

"Ethical challenges and moral stress in disaster response"

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Conceptual model of the development of moral distress

Moral distress, what is it?

- Healthcare responders perceived situations where they felt they were hindered to act upon own moral values; "morally challenging situations".
- This caused feelings of powerlessness, frustration, anger and sadness; "moral stress".
- When not being able to resolve or not finding support it can lead to "moral distress".
- Depending on available risk- and protective factors moral distress might lead to negative consequences, such as burnout.

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