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**DIETARY MANAGEMENT OF POLLUTION GENERATED EPIDEMICS AS A
RESULT OF NATURAL DISASTERS**



Monica Joshi

Govt.MLB Girls' College, Bhopal, M.P.

ABSTRACT

Natural disasters at times are themselves the result of uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. Deforestation results in soil erosion, in the initial stage and if uncontrolled, in the ultimate analysis, is found to be the basic reason for landslides and such other catastrophic disasters. It can thus be seen that the excessive exploitation of natural resources, without any program for restoration and replenishment of the damage done leads to an ecological imbalance that the generations to come have to live with. Besides there being an irreparable damage to the flora and fauna, the natural resources shall become a matter to be read about in journals and historical articles.

Keywords:

Dietary Management, Environmental, Natural Disasters.

INTRODUCTION

In the past we have been mostly concerned with the much talked about the air pollution caused by harmful effluents some of which come from the chemicals used in industries, etc, soil pollution that has been a major concern in the use of chemical based fertilizers and pesticides; there is a constant thrust on the preservation of water bodies and prevention of water pollution and the rules for disposal of industrial waste have come into existence; we have now made strict laws for urban sewage disposal also. Recent development is seen in the establishment of Green Tribunal.

Thus we see that there is a definite and direct relation between the exploitation of natural resources and pollution. The above types of pollutions have drawn the attention of all Government and non-government agencies and the general public at large, and are being addressed at various forums. These are the results of long term usage and exploitation and the solution is also a long term process and more in the nature of policy making.

However, there is yet another dimension to pollution and that is a short term phenomena but the impact of the same is catastrophic, if not understood in the right perspective. Here the attention is drawn to the pollution that is caused in the management of natural disasters, which are caused by irrational exploitation of natural resources. We invariably find that the help is rushed to the site of natural disaster from all quarters of the World. Rescue teams from the Government and a host of non-governmental agencies flock around the site of the disaster struck area. The emergency measures taken coupled with the excessive inflow of men machines and the already existing disaster are then the main source of pollution and contamination of the scarce resources and most

often the major cause of deaths and loss. The epidemics that follow as a result of the pollution and contamination take the toll and need to be controlled in a scientific manner.

In developing countries like ours it is always seen that natural disasters are invariably followed by spread of epidemics and quite often the death toll by these epidemics is by far more than the natural calamity itself. Disaster management is a complicated subject and the management of epidemics is an integral part. Little knowledge of the life sciences increases the hazards of mal nutrition and contamination of food and water, the management of epidemics becomes an important part which can be ignored only to magnify the loss already caused by the calamity. These are primarily related to the size and characteristics of the population displaced and their nutritional status, the level of immunity to vaccines-preventable diseases.

In the given situation the importance of dietary management of diseases cannot be over emphasized. The role of a diet and nutrition expert becomes very important. During a natural calamity the medical services are scarce and there is acute shortage of proper food and drinking water.

Natural disasters are catastrophic events that take place due to the atmospheric, geological and hydrological activity which we commonly known as storms / tornado, earthquakes, floods, drought, tsunamis, landslides etc. Most often it is seen that number of deaths caused by these catastrophic events is lesser than the deaths caused by the epidemics that follow these disasters. We have the recent example of the disaster at Uttarakhand where thousands of people not only from Uttarakhand but from all over the country, who were there, died. Once the rain and floods were over, the death took its toll on account of spread of diseases. To fight the spread of communicable diseases is an equally important challenge as the natural calamity itself.

It is reported that as high as two thirds of the total deaths may be due to communicable diseases rather than from the disaster itself.

The types of communicable diseases may vary from place to place and also depends upon the nature of the disaster. These may be water-related where access to safe water may be disrupted. It is on record that an outbreak of diarrheal disease recorded 17,000 cases as a result of the floods that hit Bangladesh in 2004 and a record 16,000 cases of cholera were reported in West Bengal in 1998. The phenomena is not only restricted to India but is common in all the countries of the world; however, the impact is lower in the industrially developed countries and higher in developing countries. Hepatitis A and E is yet another disease transmitted by fecal-oral route water borne disease. Contamination in wounds causes tetanus though it is not transferable from person to person. Dengue is also associated with flooding though initial floods may wash away the mosquito breeding sites but new ones develop in due course of time and pose a threat. The interruption in services such as electricity and water treatment facilities increase the threat of water contamination resulting into water borne diseases.

The priority measures that need to be taken include emphasis on safe water availability, sanitation and site planning. Primary health services are an important factor that can reduce the impact of the diseases. Creating an awareness amongst the masses is also an important factor. Early diagnosis and availability and use of treatment protocols are a must. Promotion of hand hygiene, safe food preparation techniques, chlorination of water etc are inevitable. Immunization is an important measure that must be undertaken parallelly.

A proper diet with a mix of Vitamins, proteins, carbohydrates, dietary fiber, fats, minerals, fluids etc can help reduce the impact of the disease and increase the efficacy of the medicines. A proper diet plan with the immediately available ingredients can be very helpful in the management of diseases.

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