

## **Cancer care during the natural disasters, the lessons learned from Kermanshah Earthquake in 2017**

**Kazem Zendeheel<sup>\*1</sup>, Roya Safari<sup>2</sup>**

1. Cancer Research Center, Cancer Institute of Iran, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, I.R. Iran
2. Research Center for Environmental Determinants of Health, School of Public Health, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran

During the natural disasters, like flood and earthquake, the main attention is generally paid to provide essential lifesaving services and support to affected people. Hospitals are usually occupied with the casualties who need urgent care after any massive disaster. Although cancer patients, and other patients with a chronic disease, need their own regular care, they may face specific challenges to visit hospitals, and clinics and receive standards of care according to the planned schedules. For instance, clinicians and nurses who are living in the city where the natural disaster has occurred may leave the hospitals, and even the cities to protect themselves and their families. Therefore, the hospitals will not function as routine. On the other hands, the patients may lose their relatives and properties and face challenges to commute to the hospitals for the scheduled visits and treatment. Patients will prioritize other issues in the field and postpone their treatment and care. Being shocked by the news of Kermanshah earthquake, The authors of the present paper had the sympathy with people who were suffering from the disaster and losing their homes, families, and etc. while we were thinking about the specific sufferings that the cancer patients may face during such a devastating event, we contacted a few cancer specialists and discussed their viewpoints and experience during the earthquake and came up with important insights. Dr. Arash Golpazir, a cancer surgeon working in Kermanshah province stated that “ we continued our routine clinical practice without any pauses”. There was also a similar response expressed by Dr. Mazaher Ramazani, a senior pathologist who stated that “we worked with full capacity in the lab and had no disturbances”. However, Dr. Mehrdad Payandeh, the senior oncologist had a different experience and emphasized that “we had a higher workload during the first days, but we worked hard and managed the situation and returned to our routines”. He also stated that “some of our patients who were scheduled to be visited for their chemotherapy could not reach the clinics as planned. This was due to the fact that they lost their property and relatives who supported them to attend the clinics

during their treatment. In fact our patients had to look for a place to stay with their families, leading to ignore their treatment plan and prioritize other lifesaving issues”. “Hospital should be prepared for these situation and follow-up the patients and try to assist them with special supports that have not been defined previously”. In general “health care system should be more prepared for these situations and prioritize the patient needs in collaboration with the other working service providers” he added. We share the same opinion and believe that such supports will not be available unless hospitals and supporting agencies are prepared for such situations. Unfortunately, there is no data about the ex-

tent of the problems and sufferings cancer patients face during the earthquake. In addition, the priorities and action plans were not set for such special situation, which seems to be an important priority in Iran, located in the earthquake faultlines and has experienced several earthquakes during the last decade. We suggest collecting more evidence about problems and shortcoming of cancer care in Kermanshah earthquake and use them for advocacy and preparing a plan for cancer care during the natural disasters. All stakeholders, including governments and non-governmental agencies, should join this discussion and find their important role during the future events.



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