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A Literature Review of the Current State of Disaster Rehabilitation in Japan

Topic: Miscellaneous

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BACKGROUND

Japan is highly susceptible to natural disasters due to its geographical and topographical conditions. Large-scale natural disasters significantly impact the physical and mental health of affected individuals. Rehabilitation professionals, including occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-language pathologists, fulfill crucial roles in enhancing the quality of life, maintaining health, and facilitating the return to daily activities for disaster survivors. However, comprehensive studies in Japan that provide an overview of disaster rehabilitation and discuss its challenges are limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine the current state, challenges, and future prospects of disaster rehabilitation in Japan through a literature review.

METHODS

A computerized database search was conducted using the keyword "disaster rehabilitation." Articles unrelated to disaster rehabilitation and conference proceedings were excluded. To minimize geographical and cultural biases and account for advancements in healthcare and social systems, we analyzed only Japanese articles published within the past five years.

RESULTS

A total of 44 articles were selected, including 40 commentaries and four original research articles. The commentaries primarily reported on disaster rehabilitation activities, with many focusing on the efforts of the Japan Disaster Rehabilitation Assistance Team (JRAT). The original research articles addressed topics such as psychological assessment, educational systems, and the development of support systems during disasters. Additionally, several regional activity reports highlighted the importance of preparedness and collaboration with administrative bodies. A major challenge identified was the shortage of rehabilitation professionals to assist in disaster rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that JRAT assumes a central role in disaster rehabilitation in Japan. However, enhancing accessibility to JRAT participation is essential, and challenges such as limited collaboration during non-disaster periods and the shortage of rehabilitation professionals must be addressed. In particular, occupational therapists have the potential to perform a crucial role in community building during non-disaster periods.

In the future, the development of a standardized national disaster rehabilitation manual, the establishment of training programs, and the strengthening of a nationwide support network are crucial for effective disaster rehabilitation. These models and the challenges they address may also provide valuable insights for other countries.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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