

Overviews of secondary health issues after the Fukushima incident

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The threat to the lives and health of those affected by nuclear emergencies are not limited to radiation. The threats are multifaceted as well as being short- and long-term. In this presentation we provide a brief overview of secondary health issues arising after the Fukushima triple disaster - other than radiation exposure.¹

While the most serious problem during the early stages was the impact of the evacuation of the local population, especially among vulnerable groups such as the elderly, maintaining basic health services as well as providing adequate human and material resources were all key to mitigating the negative impacts on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all.² In the medium- to long-term, various post-disaster health issues need to be carefully considered, including breakdowns in medical infrastructure and services, deterioration in lifestyle diseases, increased psychological burdens, decline in motor functions, disruption of patient treatment regimes and practices, and the local elderly population requiring drastically increased nursing care.³⁻⁵

Many of these problems are thought to have been created or exacerbated as a result of the lack of social support systems and changes in the local environment rather than due to an individual's risk perception towards radiation exposure or to poor decision-making. Consideration of these various interconnected health risks in a well-balanced manner and implementing long-term countermeasures are necessary to best cope with the aftermath of a nuclear emergency.

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