D5.0: Conducting Research after a Natural Disaster: Lessons Learned

Author List:
Presenting Author: Elizabeth Reifsnider
Additional Author: Kyungha An, Yolanda Davila, Nonie Mendias

Presenting Author: Elizabeth Reifsnider
Address: 301 University Blvd.
Galveston, Texas 77555-1029
United States
Ph: 409-772-8262
Fax:
Email: elreifsn@utmb.edu
Institution: University of Texas Medical Branch

Additional Author: Kyungha An
Address: 301 University Blvd.
Galveston, Texas 77555-1029
United States
Ph: 409-772-8262
Fax:
Email: kyungan@utmb.edu
Institution: University of Texas Medical Branch

Additional Author: Yolanda Davila
Address: 301 University Blvd
Galveston, Texas 77555-1029
United States
Ph: 409-772-8262
Fax:
Email: yrdavila@utmb.edu
Institution: University of Texas Medical Branch

Additional Author: Nonie Mendias
Address: 301 University Blvd.
Galveston, Texas 77555-1029
United States
Ph: 409-772-8262
Fax:
Email: nmendias@utmb.edu
Institution: University of Texas Medical Branch
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Abstract:
Overview: Purpose: This symposium will discuss challenges faced by researchers who were impacted by Hurricane Ike, one of the most costly hurricanes to ever hit the United States. The researchers will share how they met the challenges and what lessons they have learned about emergency preparedness that can be used by researchers at other institutions. Background: Hurricane Ike hit Galveston on September 13, 2008. It was the third most destructive hurricane to make landfall in the United States. Damages from Ike in US coastal and inland areas are estimated at $24 billion (2008 USD). It directly landed on Galveston Island and cut directly across the campus of the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). It was categorized as a hurricane 4 due to its storm surge, which flooded more than 75% of all buildings on Galveston and nearly all of the buildings on the UTMB campus. All activities at UTMB were severely affected, including patient care (UTMB has 4 hospitals on the campus), education (nursing, medical, health professions, and graduate schools), and research studies. Methods: The first paper will present the biological lab sciences perspective on coping with the hurricane and its aftermath, with suggestions for all researchers who conduct biological studies and store specimens for examination. The second paper will present the challenges faced by a community-based intervention study when the sites for recruitment are closed or severely impacted by hurricane damage. The third paper will present the challenges faced by the community residents of Galveston and how researchers collaborated with the residents to overcome these obstacles. The fourth paper will present the opportunities for research to be found in coping with natural disasters. Findings/Conclusions: All areas of the country are vulnerable to some type of natural disaster, if not from hurricanes, then from tornados, flooding, fire, etc. The lessons learned about emergency preparedness that are shared by these researchers can benefit researchers from any area of the county, and especially in the states that are represented in SNRS, 10 of which border the Gulf Coast or Atlantic Ocean.