

Mental Health and Substance Abuse in the Aftermath of Oil Spill Disasters

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Background

While not a common occurrence, oil spills are tremendous disasters leading to lasting effects on the community members, individual physical and mental health, and the overall economy. Current research on this topic is lacking due to the rareness of these spills. Of the current research, much of it is focused on marine food, immediate health symptoms, air quality, and environmental contamination¹. The purpose of this review is to examine to what extent mental health outcomes and substance abuse have been studied in oil spill disasters.

Description

The systemic review was completed using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews². Databases used includes EBSCO, PubMed, CINAHL Ultimate, and Embase. Criteria included publications between 1967-2024 and search terms “oil spill” and “mental health OR psych”. Exclusion criteria included non-academic journal or dissertation publications, multiple or non-oil disasters, gas pollution, physical health, and non-English studies. Covidence program was used for screening and data extraction.

Accomplishments

This ongoing research project began as a systematic synthesis of evidence eliciting the results of publications focusing exclusively on mental health and oil spill disasters. This abstract pulls a subset of this data to assess substance use and mental health in the aftermath of oil spills.

Discussion

The data of this study is still being extracted and analyzed, the results aim to assess to what extent studies have examined mental health outcomes, specifically substance abuse, in those who survived an oil spill disaster.

Future Steps

The goal of this project is to illustrate a need to specialized interventions within these communities following disaster focusing on mental health and not just physical health and community rebuilding. Future studies are needed to further assess the delicate topic of mental health in the aftermath of disaster.

References

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