

We are excited to share this editorial for the second issue of Volume 12 in 2023. In this issue, the *International Journal of Emergency Services (IJES)* is again publishing nine original articles that explore a range of subjects relevant to the three main emergency services (ambulance police and fire) including other agencies involved in disaster preparedness and management. It includes focused themes such as impact of COVID-19 on first responders, mental health and stress patterns in call centers and firefighters, emergency preparedness and multi-agency collaboration and decision-making issues. All the nine papers address a research gap on the issues being examined and make a significant contribution to emergency management literature, and improve the scholarly and practitioner understanding of the emergency services.

In our first article entitled “A systematic review of the factors that contribute towards mental health in the fire service”, Lydia Garmon-Jones, Paul Hanna and Mary John highlight the growing concerns surrounding the mental health and post-traumatic stress within firefighters. Their systematic literature review highlights those factors such as sleep, occupational stress, length of service, coping style and social support, as discussed in the literature, do influence negative mental health within firefighters. However, this paper highlights challenges for distinguishing the nature of these relationships due to the possible bi-directional nature of the relationships and calls for further research to explore the biological, psychological and social factors influencing mental health outcomes in firefighters and the direction of these relationships, to inform effective intervention and support. Findings are relevant for first responders in other settings (Lawn *et al.*, 2020).

Annika Eklund, Sofia Karlsson and Lina Gyllencreutz, in their paper entitled “Building ‘common knowledge’ when responding to major road tunnel incidents: an inter-organisational focus group study” highlight several challenges in a tunnel environment which is currently under-researched), for the emergency service organizations in terms of heat, visibility and lack of experiences from working in confined environments. The study explores the usefulness of the “common knowledge” framework (Edwards, 2011) in field of collaborative tunnel responses. Empirical evidence was gathered from participants recruited from the road traffic control center, emergency dispatch center, emergency medical service, rescue service and police in Sweden. This study illustrated how common knowledge is built to adjust responses due to distances and aligned motives, where primary responsibilities and access to plans and information diverge in road tunnel incidents. The findings contribute with a motive orientation to the continuous discussion of developing collaboration while sharing and aligning knowledge in practice and have a wider significance to support the ability to act in even more complex contexts and settings.

Our third article in this issue explores the preparedness of emergency physicians (EPs) and general practitioners (GPs) following chemical, radiological and nuclear (CRN) incidents. In their paper entitled “Preparedness for chemical, radiologic and nuclear incidents among a sample of emergency physicians’ and general practitioners—a qualitative study”, Lina Gyllencreutz, Carl-Pontus Carlsson, Sofia Karlsson and Pia Hedberg conducted a qualitative descriptive study using semi-structured individual interviews based on vignettes which highlighted chemical (C), radiological (R) and nuclear (N) incidents. The results from their study concluded that to be able to strengthen the ability of EPs and GPs to respond adequately to a CRN incident several aspects must be considered namely, preparedness, response, decontamination and personal protective equipment (PPE). It further emphasizes the importance of knowledge on general primary surveys and how best to seek support and



calls for further research on the level of expertise of physicians at various healthcare departments to respond to CRN incidents (Vangen and Huxham, 2012).

In our next article entitled “Building sustainable community resilience and business preparedness through stakeholder perspective”, Shuaib Ahmed Soomro examines the efforts of business and community-based organizations to increase engagement in building resilience to violent acts of terrorism in the community. The exploratory qualitative study involved observation and interviews with 21 practitioners and local stakeholders in two cities in Sind, Pakistan during a period of high stress from terrorist violence between November and December 2020. The study highlighted the important role played by community-based organizations in building resilience against violent acts of terrorism including the implementation of a wide spectrum of community engagement initiatives. Study findings have wider implications as well.

Busra Nur Coban and Ebru Inal Onal in their article entitled “Determination of health workers’ perceptions of the disaster management process and gender inequality: the case of a state hospital in Turkey” aim to identify levels of gender perception specific to disaster management process and gender-related factors among the health workers in their case study. Survey data were collected from over 200 participants recruited in the study and analyzed using SPSS. Findings revealed that almost 88 and 74% participants reported that women and men were equally affected by disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic respectively. The study makes an important contribution to highlight the importance of improving gender perception in health workers due to their increasing role in disaster management and the significance of integrating women into the disaster training.

Our sixth article is co-authored by Agung Sutrisno, Cynthia Erlita Virgin Wuisang and Ade Yusupa, is entitled “Disaster readiness assessment model using integrated statistical variance and proximity value index”. In the paper, the authors argue for the need of an effective method to measure hospital disaster readiness and minimize casualties within resource constraints including a lack of an integrated methodology in the literature. The study provides a new model by integrating the statistical variance method with the proximity value index (PVI) technique to determine priority scores to rank organizational disaster readiness in hospital setting. Study results suggest the usefulness of applying the integrated model developed herein enable decision-makers to make informed decisions for assigning priority ranking of organizational disaster preparedness in a simpler and more efficient way. There are clear implications for building on this research to incorporate other multi-criteria decision-making techniques (Kapucu *et al.*, 2009; Wankhade and Patnaik, 2019).

In our next article entitled “Collaborating in a centralized governance mechanism: structure and fragmentation of large-scale response coordination during the 2018 Typhoon Mangkhut in Shenzhen”, Xiao Wang examines a large-scale typhoon response coordination, focusing on the emergency collaborative network (ECN) configuration and structural properties that characterized the 2018 Typhoon Mangkhut response operations in Shenzhen, China. Employing a systematic content analysis of publicly available official documents and material, the study utilized social network metrics at levels of the node, subgroup of nodes and whole network to examine the network capacity, homophily and network performance. The findings revealed that government agencies at municipal and district/county levels took central network positions while private and non-profit organizations were mostly positioned at the network periphery. The blocking analysis points to a salient homophily effect that participating organizations sharing similar attributes were more likely to connect with each other. A further examination of network performance revealed the fragmented and discontinued features of ECN in resource and information sharing. These findings are consistent with other studies highlighting similar challenges for collaborative disaster response and coordination (Wankhade and Murphy, 2023; Nohrstedt, 2016; Wilson and Grammich, 2015).

Catherine Powell, Beth Fylan, Kathryn Lord, Fiona Bell and Liz Breen in their paper entitled “A qualitative analysis of stressors affecting 999 ambulance call handlers’ mental health and well-being” investigate the important but under-researched theme of stress triggers experienced by 999 ambulance call handlers that could lead to burnout and examine the personal and organizational mechanisms and strategies which reduced the risk of burnout. Participants were recruited from one NHS ambulance trust in a qualitative study involving 18 interviews with frontline ambulance call handlers in 2019. Study findings identified several societal factors (public incivility, media representation) and organizational factors such as demanding environment, lack of appreciation and career progression, training issues and protocols as key stressors. While organizational well-being services were found to be helpful, they lacked universal accessibility and appropriateness. Positive factors in reducing stress and burnout included positive public feedback, peer and mentor support, sufficient breaks, feeding back on training and protocols among others. The study builds upon the limited empirical evidence base to highlight the need for improved organizational support services and appropriate public and sector peer recognition of the role of ambulance 999 ambulance call handlers (see [Greenberg et al., 2020](#); [Wild et al., 2020](#)).

In our final article in this issue entitled “The impact of COVID-19 on first responders in the United States of America”, Andrea M. Headley, Christa Remington, Kaila Witkowski, Santina L. Contreras and Nazife Emel Ganapati examine the individual impact of the pandemic on first responders and the organizational impact of COVID-19 on first response agencies including the policy and organizational response and support efforts to mitigate potentially harmful effects of the pandemic. A mixed method approach encompassing surveys, semi-structured interviews and PhotoVoice focus group with participants representing firefighters, paramedics/EMTs and police officers in the USA was used to collect data. Findings revealed additional responsibilities and workloads, job-related stress, burnout and feelings of frustration by the respondents. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) did not provide enough assurance to prevent the virus from spreading to family members and friends. Several organizational implications such as proactive training, building up supply of PPE and equipment, employee retention and better communication were identified to prepare for the next crisis. These findings are important and conform to similar evidence found in other studies ([Wankhade, 2023](#); [Murray et al., 2021](#); [Scambler, 2020](#)).

We are very proud for *IJES* to have included in the *Academic Journal Guide 2021* published by the Chartered Association of Business School (CABS) as 2* journal and in the Journal Quality list published by the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) as a “C” rated journal. We owe our gratitude to our authors, reviewers and readers including the wider emergency management community for this recognition in such a short period of time. We are grateful to our authors who publish in *IJES* and other scholars who cite our research.

In 2023, *IJES* has been represented at major international conferences by sponsoring/hosting specialist panels/presenting papers on emergency services management by the editors and editorial team. This included the Annual International Research Society for Public Management (IRSPM) conference held in Budapest, Hungary in April 2023 and the forthcoming British Academy of Management (BAM) conference being held at the University of Sussex, UK in September 2023.

We again renew our call for publishing with us or joining *IJES* as potential reviewers and/or on the editorial board.

Paresh Wankhade

References

- Edwards, A. (2011), "Building common knowledge at the boundaries between professional practices: relational agency and relational expertise in system of distributed expertise", *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 50 No. 1, pp. 33-39.
- Greenberg, N., Docherty, M., Gnanapragasam, S. and Wessely, S. (2020), "Managing mental health challenges faced by healthcare workers during Covid-19 pandemic", *British Medical Journal*. doi: [10.1136/bmj.m1211](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m1211).
- Kapucu, N., Augustin, M.E. and Garayev, V. (2009), "Interstate partnerships in emergency management: emergency management assistance compact in response to catastrophic disasters", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 69, pp. 297-313.
- Lawn, S., Roberts, L., Willis, E., Couzner, L., Mohammadi, L. and Goble, E. (2020), "The effects of emergency medical service work on the psychological, physical, and social wellbeing of ambulance personnel: a systematic review of qualitative research", *BMC Psychiatry*, Vol. 20 No. 1, p. 348, doi: [10.1186/s12888-020-02752-4](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02752-4).
- Murray, E., Kaufman, K.R. and Williams, R. (2021), "Let us do better: learning lessons for recovery of healthcare professionals during and after COVID-19", *BJPsych Open*, Vol. 7 No. 5, e151, 19, doi: [10.1192/bjo.2021.981](https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2021.981).
- Nohrstedt, D. (2016), "Explaining mobilization and performance of collaborations in routine emergency management", *Administration & Society*, Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 135-162.
- Scambler, G. (2020), "Covid-19 as a 'breaching experiment': exposing the fractured society", *Health Sociology Review*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 140-148.
- Vangen, S. and Huxham, C. (2012), "The tangled web: unravelling the principle of common goals in collaborations", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 731-760.
- Wankhade, P. (2023), "New development: a 'journey of personal and professional emotions'—emergency ambulance professionals during Covid-19", *Public Money & Management*, Vol. 43 No. 5, pp. 424-426.
- Wankhade, P. and Murphy, P. (2023), *Emergency Services Management: A Research Overview*, Routledge, London.
- Wankhade, P. and Patnaik, S. (2019), *Collaboration and Governance in the Emergency Services: Issues, Opportunities and Challenges*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wild, J., Greenberg, N., Moulds, M.L., Sharp, M.-L., Fear, N., Harvey, S., Wessely, S. and Bryant, R.A. (2020), "Pre-incident training to build resilience in first responders: recommendations on what to and what not to do", *Psychiatry*, Vol. 83 No. 2, pp. 128-142.
- Wilson, J.M. and Grammich, C.A. (2015), "Deconsolidation of public- safety agencies providing police and fire services", *International Criminal Justice Review*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 361-378.