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## Disasters and Mental Health: Experience in Colombia and Ecuador and Its Relevance for Primary Care in Mental Health in Latin America

Disasters are extraordinary, but relatively frequent, events that entail huge material losses and can result in death, physical injury, and human suffering [1]. This definition has been complemented by Quarantelli [2], who defines disasters from the sociological perspective as "crisis situations in which demands exceed resources." What is clear is that a disaster is not a technological accident or a natural event, but is the impact of that accident or that event on a human community. What defines the magnitude of a disaster is not the magnitude of the event, but the magnitude of its human and material consequences. Since a human being is by nature a biopsychosocial organism, the effects of disasters must be evaluated on those three levels (biopsychosocial) as the framework for providing for the victims the health care necessary for the prevention, detection, and management of physical, psychological, and social sequelae.

The importance of such events for mental health professionals has been under-

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