

Abstract

Decision-making in lack of resources in the health care system during mass casualties and disasters

The thesis discusses the ethics of decision-making in the situation of the lack of material and personnel resources during managing mass casualties and disasters. The overview of basics of disaster medicine, principles of crisis preparedness and management of mass casualties are presented in the introduction. Basic terms are explained here: types of mass casualties, phases of reaction, immediate response services, and special attention is dedicated to explanation of medical triage during normal and extreme circumstances.

The second part of the thesis deals with ethical theories related to disaster medicine. Deontology, consequentialism, utilitarianism, ethics of biomedical principles, virtue ethics, justice and the concept of human rights, communitarianism and care ethics are analysed.

COVID-19 pandemic was chosen as a reference event. It is presented as a case report focusing on decision-making concerning allocation of scarce resources in the health care system. Guidelines for ethical decision-making during the critical phases of pandemic that were created in the years 2020-2021 are analysed.

Some possible activities for improvement of crisis preparedness for future challenges of disaster medicine are suggested in the final part. Ethical point of view should be implemented in crisis plans of all levels, especially the principles of justice, equity, human rights and protection of vulnerable groups. Practical approach based on clinical ethics should be implemented in pregradual and postgradual education of health care workers. Psychosocial support of health care workers and the possibility of ethical consultation if needed are some of the elements of prevention of lack of personnel.

Keywords

lack of resources, health care system, mass casualty, disaster, ethics