

[1] Natural disasters and mental health, including due to global climate change

The 121st Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology will be held in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture. Kobe was the site of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake on January 17, 1995, which triggered widespread awareness of post-disaster psychological care and PTSD in Japan.

Natural disasters are catastrophic events with atmospheric, geologic and hydrologic origins, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, tsunamis, floods and drought. Natural disasters can trigger other disasters through human activities and cause increased damage. For example, in the Noto Peninsula earthquake in Japan on January 1st, 2024, the earthquake not only triggered a tsunami, but also caused a major fire due to the collapse of houses.

The impact of natural disasters on mental health is enormous. Not only do natural disasters cause stress and grief reactions, but they also worsen mental health status through community disruption, financial strain, displacement, and changes in close relationships. On the other hand, it is important to remember that there are many psychologically recovered survivors.

Climate change-related disasters are also a global concern. However, the link between exposure to chronic climate change-related events, such as sea level rise and permafrost melt, and mental health has not been fully explored. A recent review found that indigenous people, children, older adults, and climate migrants are among the vulnerable populations whose mental health is most affected by climate change.

Applicants are required to submit an abstract responding to the following questions.

In your country/region,

Q1. What activities have been done in the past to address post-disaster mental health? You can focus on the individual, household, community, and societal levels.

Q2. What natural disasters/global climate change-related disasters are most likely to affect mental health in the next 10 years, and what effects will be seen?

Q3. What activities should be undertaken to understand and support community strengths, build resilience, and promote positive mental health and well-being as part of disaster preparedness?