

CHAPTER 7

THE 1980 EARTHQUAKE IN SOUTHERN ITALY - MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

by

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Earthquakes are of great public health importance and yet, there is a considerable lack of data on which preparedness and relief management can be based. In this paper, the results of a study of the effects on health of the 1980 earthquake in Southern Italy are presented.

The aims of the study were : (1) to study risk factors for injury and death; (2) to identify the most appropriate type and timing of rescue. Some problems of rescue of trapped victims and mortality have been reviewed elsewhere.

METHODS

Sampling: The reference population comprised those people living in the region most affected by the earthquake within which seven villages, covering an area of 261 km², were selected for study according to criteria such as a crude injury rate of over 50 per thousand and a mortality rate of over 20 per thousand.

One in three households were chosen randomly using the population registers as the sampling frame. Thus, the sample was composed of 1 300 households (total 3619 people), whose members were in the study area on the day of the disaster.

Definitions: The "injured" were classified as those who reported themselves as being injured and could describe the type and part of the body affected. People who died immediately as a consequence of impact, or people who were found dead when extricated, were classified as "early deaths from impact". A "casualty" was defined as a person either dead