



## How can we Reduce the Vulnerability of the Elderly in Disasters?"Letter to Editor"

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### What is the elderly?

The definition of elderly can be described as: natural, progressive, spontaneous and irreversible physiological changes, in which both physical and mental strength are significantly impaired. Old age is conventionally synonymous with the onset of age 65 [1].

### What is disaster?

Disorders in the functioning of society and their interactions occur as a result of natural and unnatural events that lead to economic, social, environmental and human damage [2].

### Disaster and elderly

With the increase in health services and the increase in the quality of life in most communities, life expectancy has increased. And this increases the aging population of each country. On the other hand, crises have historically been a threat to societies, and not only have they not diminished with the advancement of technology, but they have been on the rise. As the aging population increases and crises and disasters increase in societies, unfortunate consequences occur that require planning and preventive measures. Everyone is affected by disasters, but older people are more vulnerable than other age groups. "Vulnerability" means how much people are affected by a disaster.

One of the main reasons for vulnerability in the elderly is the presence of chronic diseases, such as "diabetes, high blood pressure, Alzheimer, disabilities, etc.", which is related to pre-disaster. Other causes of vulnerability in the elderly are accidents after disasters. Chronic diseases affect activity levels in the elderly and restrict their movement. With the occurrence of disasters, the elderly who have multiple illnesses need extensive measures compared

to other age groups, which are often neglected. In the aftermath of disasters, rescue teams provide an overview of victim service and do not specifically address the needs of vulnerable groups, especially the elderly, because the needs of the elderly after disasters are completely different from other age groups.

Providing focused post-disaster care services virtually does not help vulnerable seniors. Because many elderly people are unable to access these services due to mobility limitations, loneliness, lack of family, various diseases, and the risk of injury increases.

### Strategies to reduce the vulnerability of the elderly in times disaster

- Creating a database of the elderly in health centers in order to quickly identify the elderly after the disaster (such as address - type of disease - type of disability, required drugs, etc.)
- Providing mobile health services instead of centralized services (due to mobility limitations and various comorbidity in the elderly)
- Systematic registration and Mobile distribution of food according to the nutritional needs of the elderly
- More caregivers pay attention to the needs of the elderly after disaster (because it is thought that public assistance is sufficient for the elderly and meets their needs).
- Existence of a geriatrician or geriatric nurse in the helper team, In order to accurately identify the needs of the elderly
- Insurance support for the elderly to prevent increased costs of treatment and housing reconstruction
- Prevention of post-crisis social ills through regular screening in the elderly

- Familiarity of families with the issues and problems of the elderly after the crisis and sufficient attention to solve it
- Securing the elderly living space to prevent further injuries (internal components)
- Resistance check of buildings where the elderly live.
- Periodic evaluation of mental health of the elderly by a psychiatrist (post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, grief).

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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