

BURN MASS CASUALTY INCIDENTS: THE CHALLENGE

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Burn mass casualty incidents (BMCI) can pose unique challenges due to presence of other traumatic injuries requiring a multidisciplinary approach and specialized skills, knowledge and resources. With an increase in number of BMCIs globally and variation in burn care capacity it is imperative to enhance current burn care capabilities. Burn centers with their concentration of management expertise play a critical role in providing necessary care for patients. In state of Sarawak, Malaysia the main established burn centers are in Sarawak General Hospital lead by plastic surgeons and a burn unit in Hospital Bintulu. In recent years Sarawak had dealt with two BMCI – the Selantik coal mine explosion in 2014 and City One Megamall explosion in 2018. Victims from both incidents were sent to Sarawak General Hospital for further management highlighting the challenges faced. A retrospective data analysis was conducted using news reports, disaster records, and hospital records. The results show that victims of the Selantik disaster had a worse outcome compared to those of the City One Megamall disaster. This disparity can be attributed to several factors, including location (rural vs urban), the preparedness of the healthcare system to handle the scale (119 vs 41 victims), type of disaster, and the number of burn injuries with inhalational injury (63% vs 20%). In conclusion, for effective management of BMCI it is crucial to regularly update and maintain staff capabilities and resources. Regular review and exercise of established major disaster plan in conjunction with multiple frontline agencies is also important in testing and training the preparedness of the system in handling BMCI.