



GLOBAL SKIN HEALTH

SKIN IN THE TIME OF KERALA FLOODS

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Background: Floods are natural disasters that can occur occasionally in any part of the world. In mid August 2018, the state of Kerala in India witnessed massive unprecedented floods that left thousands stranded inside their submerged houses or homeless and had to be evacuated to temporary to camps. The flash floods caused due to excessive rainfall and overflowing dams affected almost the entire state especially low lying semi urban areas along river banks and villages surrounding dams. Skin health is the major concern during and after these disasters, being the first to be exposed to adverse environmental changes. We compile a unique series of cases seen during this time period (immediate and late) in emergency relief camps and subsequently in hospital clinics.

Observations: Dermatoses which presented to us could be divided based on the time line they presented to the physician. In the immediate period of calamity, most skin lesions were traumatic, ranging from cuts and bruises to scalp lacerations while wading in waist deep waters or trying to escape in boats and air lifts. In the temporary relief camps, insect bite reactions, urticaria, infections and infestations started making an appearance. Later, as they returned home, patients presented with irritant contact dermatoses secondary to the excessive use of bleach for disinfecting homes and surroundings. Within a month, exacerbations of psoriasis, atopic dermatitis and feet eczema were seen due to stressors and various mitigating factors. Later, patients reported with relapses of diseases in remission including pemphigus and psoriasis. Incognito dermatophytosis was alarming due to self medication during the adverse times.

Key messages: Skin takes a major hit during times of flood. Various kinds of cutaneous lesions are seen ranging from minor cutaneous infections and eczemas to significant autoimmune dermatoses precipitated by extreme stressful circumstances. Informed management in this time is crucial.

