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At The USA Embassy In Nairobi: The Media Response

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Abstract:

On 7th August 1998, a terrorist bomb destroyed the American Embassy in Nairobi, killing and injuring thousands of people. To describe the media component of the (larger) mental health response, and evaluate the impact of the intervention. Descriptive cross sectional study. Nairobi, three months after the explosion. Residents of Nairobi and outlying areas, exposed to the bomb blast and who received Radio and TV coverage about the explosion. Radio and TV broadcasts, starting hours after the explosion and continuing for two weeks thereafter. Of a sample of 400 respondents interviewed, 172 reported they were affected by the bomb blast, either directly or through friends and relatives. TV and radio had the highest reach, (89% and 85%) respectively. Seventy per cent felt the programmes gave victims hope and 90% felt the programmes should continue, as they were helpful to the needy. The media is a controversial, sometimes overused and at times underused resource in Disaster Management. Judicious use of the media was shown to be helpful in this study. Literature supports media interventions in disaster. Doctors working in disaster areas need to understand the media and to prepare for its use as it compliments other interventions.