THE IMPACT OF THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE ON ALCOHOL, NICOTINE AND HYPNOTIC ABUSE AND GAMBLING IN DISASTER-STRICKEN AREAS

S. Matsushita1, H. Sakuma1, T. Takimura1, M. Kimura1, Y. Osaki2 and S. Higuchi1
1National Hospital Organization Kurihama Medical and Addiction Center, Japan and 2Division of Environmental and Preventive Medicine, Tottori University

Introduction. A huge earthquake and resulting tsunami struck north-eastern Japan in 2011 and caused widespread damage. It is believed that mental health problems, including substance abuse, increased in the area after the disaster.

Subjects and Methods. The subjects were 3600 people living where the damage caused by the tsunami was most severe and 2000 people living outside the disaster-stricken areas. Interviewers asked about drinking and smoking and also conducted semi-structured interviews based on the questionnaires which allowed the determination of whether subjects met the DSM-IV criteria for alcohol dependence. The following self-reporting questionnaires were asked: AUDIT, FTND, BDEPQ and SOGS.

Results. The prevalence of tobacco and hypnotic use and the frequency of subjects with high FTND and BDEPQ scores were higher in the coastal female group than the remaining two groups. The frequency of heavy alcohol use was associated with unemployment due to the disaster. The percentage of subjects with high SOGS scores was highest in the coastal area male group than the remaining two groups.

Conclusion. These results suggest that, in the disaster-stricken area, alcohol related problems and pathological gambling are increased in men while hypnotic and nicotine dependence is increased in women.