UCSD DEPARTMENTS OF ANTHROPOLOGY & PSYCHIATRY PRESENT

Brandon Kohrt, MD, PhD

Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Global Health and Cultural Anthropology
Duke University

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3:30pm
Social Sciences Building, Dean's Conference Room 107*
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Earthquakes and Emergencies in Nepal: Building Sustainable Mental Health Systems amid Political, Structural, and Seismic Violence

Two large 7.8 and 7.3 magnitude earthquakes and more than 500 aftershocks greater than 4.0 magnitude struck Nepal in 2015 resulting in 8,600 deaths, displacement of 450,000 people, and 8.5 million people deprived of access to shelter, food, healthcare, and education. The international community donated millions of dollars to health efforts, including $17 million from Facebook, with a substantial investment in mental health services. However, prior international mental health responses to humanitarian emergencies have been criticized widely, including in detailed ethnographic research, for short-term services, lack of sustainable mental healthcare, an exclusive focus on trauma to the neglect of other mental health and psychosocial needs, stigmatizing survivors of disasters, and undermining existing recovery and support structures. Therefore, to minimize risk of these unintended consequences, governmental and non-governmental organizations strove for collaborative, sustainable efforts building upon a decade of mental health systems strengthening and anthropological research following Nepal's civil war. Approaches to diagnosis and psychological treatment ranging from WHO programs to school counseling integrated Nepali ethnopsychological frameworks to promote effectiveness and reduce stigma. Transculturally adapted instruments revealed that earthquake-related PTSD rates were low (5.2%) whereas chronic mental health problems related to depression, anxiety, and alcohol use problems affected 1 out of 5 adults. This work demonstrates the opportunities and challenges for integrating anthropological theory and methods into global mental health interventions during humanitarian emergencies.

*All are cordially welcome to a reception following the colloquium in SSB 269